"DIT IS BAIE MOOI IN DIE KERK"

Experiences of Work and Religion among Farm Workers on Selected Farms in the Western Cape

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts in the Department of Religious Studies - University of Cape Town

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ABSTRACT

This study defends the thesis that the strong religious attitude of farm workers is a result of the socio-economic conditions and cultural traditions this specific workers' group faces. Furthermore, experiences of religion and the church as institution are regarded as a reflection of the level of awareness and consciousness.

The thesis examines methodically the socio-economic and religious context of farm workers from different farms in the Wellington and Robertson district of the Western Cape. Qualitative and quantitative data was collected by conducting interviews. The questionnaire comprised of closed and open-ended questions. The broader field of religion and society and theories on work have been considered.

The analytical aim of the research project is to show how experiences of work influence farm workers' way of perceiving socio-economic conditions and expressing religious feeling. In addition, this thesis provides an insight into farm workers' view of churches.

The findings of the thesis are that farm workers live in a very specific and 'closed' context. In other words, farms represent a context with different norms and values - compared with urban areas. The context is also influenced by the understanding that the relationship between workers and the farmer is similar to that of a family. The farmer is regarded as the 'father' and the workers as 'his children'. It has become clear during the course of the research project that a relationship exists between work, religion and alienation.

Alienation has different faces, and the prevailing tradition of paternalism on farms is

one such expression. Farms are dominated by various forms of paternalism. It influences workers' rather uncritical perception of the exploiting conditions they live in. Paternalism is also an influencing factor for the existence of a strong religious life on farms. Faith provides a way to cope with the harsh realities in rural areas.

Different biblical, theological and sociological approaches have been examined to support the hypotheses of this research project. They provide different explanations of a phenomenon that influences every aspect of life. Finally, an attempt has been made to provide ways of overcoming the crisis on farms by offering a specific and more relevant ministry to farm workers.

CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION

Of workers' movements in rural areas, farm workers are almost the largest group. This is especially the case in the Western Cape, where a large number of fruit and wine farms are situated. Farm workers are also one of the largest groups in churches in this area. As such they have to be considered as a very specific membership group. They live under conditions that are very different from those in urban areas. They face work and living conditions that powerfully impact their daily lives. Farm workers' religious life and experience are affected by their socio-economic and working context, including housing conditions, education and social awareness.

This thesis enquires why farm workers experience religion and the church as an institution very differently from urban workers. They are in general very religious and have a particular perspective on the church and faith. A ministry to farm workers requires, therefore, a very specific approach. Educational standards, traditions and specific problems such as alcoholism have to be considered. The language of the minister or priest and his or her way of relating the biblical stories to farm workers is also important.

An attempt is made to show why farm workers approach reality in a certain way. One has to look at factors that influence their decisions and perceptions. The thesis analyses the religious experience of farm workers on a number of farms in the Wellington and Robertson district of the Western Cape. The case studies provide the basis for further elaboration of the question of how (theoretical) biblical and theological insights can be developed on the basis of this research project. It argues that churches do not clearly provide a specific ministry to farm workers that addresses their needs and problems. Finally, the thesis seeks to offer a (new) concept of a ministry to farm workers.

As a study project of the Institute for Contextual Theology (ICT) in the 1980s has shown, *industrial workers* do not feel fully represented by their respective churches, even though they are the largest membership group. They feel a discrepancy between working and religious life and therefore see themselves alienated from the church. Many report that their labour related problems and their lives as workers are not sufficiently attended to by their minister and the church. While, on the one hand, they are religiously committed to God they feel a sense of alienation not only in the work place (low wages, discrimination and working conditions) but also in their churches.[1]

The term 'church' or 'churches' includes worship services, liturgy and structures from which many workers are alienated. Although many of them are church members,

> "... perhaps many sing in its choirs, (some) even preach... (they) seldom find any significant connection between their religious life and their working life, and they relate to them as separated in theory and practice."[2]

The goal of this thesis is to enquire why *farm workers* - in particular those in the Wellington and Worcester district of the Western Cape - experience religion and church very differently from industrial workers. Farm workers who have been interviewed experience a different form of alienation to that of urban workers. They identify their sense of alienation as essential. This suggests that their religious experience is strongly influenced by the conditions on the farms. Farm workers in the Western Cape and indeed in South Africa are, with few exceptions, not yet able to organise themselves or to be organised into viable unions. In comparison,

> "...industrial workers have been able to organise themselves and win conces-

[1] The Oxford Dictionary defines 'alienation' as "to feel alienated, estranged from friends, society, etc.", in: "The Concise Oxford Dictionary of Current English", ed. by Allan, R.E. Oxford: Clarendon Press 8th Edition 1991, 28.
[2] Institute for Contextual Theology (henceforth ICT): "Workers, the Church and the Alienation of Religious Life". Braamfontein: Institute fro Contextual Theology 1991, 2.

> sions from employers... farm workers remain entirely on their employers' mercy."[3]

Living and working conditions are, however, slowly improving due to improved labour laws, the farm management movement, outside pressure and, as Andrew Murray suggests, the need to attract more workers "to overcome the coloured labour shortage... in the 1970s and 1980s"[4]. The conditions on the farms are, nevertheless, far from adequate, reflecting a form of modified feudalism.

Workers on farms are caught in a double bind. They experience social and economic exploitation. The average wage of the interviewed workers was about R 78 per week. The socio-economic burden has tremendous implications for the private and communal life. Alcoholism, abuse of women and children, the problems of working mothers and related issues are consequences of this.

As the relation between farmers and workers can only be described as paternalistic, the employer views 'his' or 'her' workers as his or her *property* or *children*.[5] There are usually no working contracts, at best there are only verbal agreements. Labour laws, increasingly common at a factory level, do not exist. Although some changes have taken place on farms, dependency still determines the daily life. Access to the farms, to housing and medical services, the role of women and children and the availability of education are determined by the farmer - unlike in the urban industry. Andries Du Toit is right to argue in this regard that

> "So deep is the unity of the farm community... that it simply does not make

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[3] Davies, W.: "We cry for our land: Farm workers in South Africa". Oxford: Oxfam 1990, vii.
[4] Murray, A.: "Restructuring Paternalism: The Changing Nature of Labour Control on Wine Farms in Koelenhof." MSocSci Thesis. Cape Town: University of Cape Town 1993, 1.
[5] Cf. Groenewald, C.J. & Lubbers, M.: "Gemeenskapontwikkeling op plaase in die Wes Kap." Stellenbosch: Universiteit van Stellenbosch 1986, 3.

sense to think of workers or farmers as two significantly separate groups."[6]

The employer and the work structure allow hardly any other activities on farms - except women's clubs in off-seasons, sports and choirs. Efforts to organise workers have only been successful to a limited extent. Often the only activity encouraged by the farmers is religion, involving church on Sundays either on the farm premises or with farmers providing transport into town, prayer meetings led by ministers, evangelists or the farmer himself, or activities such as church Bazaars. When asked the question how they feel about going to church, most of the workers answer: "Haai, dit is baie mooi in die kerk"[7]. The thesis seeks to unpack this response.

Faith is in general understood as a moral and legalistic guideline for life. The church is seen as offering ways to deal with personal problems such as family conflicts, alcoholism and how to gain spiritually. There is no significant linkage between these problems and socio-economic conditions on the farms.

Living in a context of dependency and paternalism in which life and work is closely inter-related in small communities, the experiences of farm workers differ substantially from that of urban industrial workers. The findings concerning religious experiences in the ICT survey are in some ways the opposite side of the coin to that of farm workers, one of the main reasons being the paternalistic relationship between workers and the farm management or farmer. The study argues that this is a form of alienation. The paternalistic context causes a rather uncritical attitude towards the churches as farm workers are, in general, so caught up in a situation of political and socio-economic disempowerment that their lives are hardly self-determined. The inter-relationship between religious, working and private life places a certain pressure on the individual workers. In this regard, urban and rural workers differ significantly.

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[6] Du Toit, A.: "The Farm as Family. Paternalism, Management and Modernisation on Western Cape Wine and Fruit Farms". Stellenbosch: Centre for Rural Legal Studies 1992, 8.

[7] Worker Farm A, interviewed 13.12.1994.

It is important to look not only at the conditions of workers on the farms and their religious life, but also at the interface between the two spheres of life. If the church or religion in general offers rural workers a sense of belonging and community (and probably dignity as well), it does not necessarily mean that their religious activities work towards the improvement of socio-economic conditions. If the lack of organisation in efforts to improve their working conditions is due to a deep rooted religion (besides the threat of eviction by the farmer), it must be asked whether a relationship of paternalism on the farms contributes to their escape into private and individualistic faith. Whether purposely or not, it also contributes to the difficulties in facing their existence as farm workers.

AIMS

The emphasis of this thesis is the experience of religion, i.e. Christianity and the church. Within this experience, the social, economic and political forces also have to be considered. The basis of the research project is primarily the gathering of information through interviews. As such, the presentation is both analytical and descriptive. The empirical material is based primarily on extensive interviews with thirty-three workers and in consultation with various ministers and community workers who have been involved with farm workers. The insights gained from the fieldwork are integrated into a theoretical discussion.

After the data obtained in the interviews has been analysed, the thesis engages in a theoretical examination of experiences of alienation at three different levels: as seen biblically, theologically and in terms of historical materialism. The biblical perspective, firstly, focuses on one important feature of the Old Testament perspective on la-

bour - the Exodus movement (Ex 5) and, secondly, on the New Testament parable of "the Workers in the Vineyard" (Mt 20). The theological chapter seeks to analyse the view of labour in the papal letter *Laborem Excercens* and the liberation theology of Gustavo Gutierrez. The sociological chapter emphasises the approach of Karl Marx towards alienation that is decisive for many other (even non-Marxist) sociological discussions of alienation. In the final chapter a new approach of churches and other institutions towards the alienation and deprivation of farm workers is proposed.

METHODOLOGY

The interface between working and religious life has to be approached on two levels - empirical and theoretical conceptual. The *empirical methodology* is used to gather information from farm workers themselves. This data is both quantitative and qualitative. It is quantitative in that the information is gathered descriptively making up a social profile of farm workers in terms of age, education, family status and wages for exampleand qualitative in that the questions about a religious profile relate to labourers' own opinions. Within this twofold approach the aims outlined above are to be achieved.

The research came face to face with a range of difficulties. To gain access to farm workers required a contact person that was known to the farmer, as they were often suspicious of people from the outside. One farmer wanted to have the questionnaire in advance. Farmer A and managers B-C did not give permission to visit the workers' houses.[8] They allowed only interviews at farmer A's house. Even when workers' houses were out of sight of the farmer many labourers were afraid of the *piemper*, a paid informant for the farmer. They would, therefore, rather seek permission from their employer before giving information to outsiders. This seem to be a further sign of disempowerment and paternalism. On the farms in Robertson, however, there were no major problems as one of the interviewed ministers accompanied the researcher. Farmers here were not contacted in advance. Although the experiences on farms A-C were very negative and unfortunate the research topic of other researchers, like David Mayson, who investigated the lack of organisation among farm workers, was much more 'suspicious' to the farmers than a religious topic.[9]

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[8] In order to protect the identity of the interviewed workers as well as the farmers, managers, ministers and community workers, the participants of the research remain anonymous.

[9] Cf. for example Mayson, D.: "Hey you must remember we living here on the farms. A look at the reasons for the lack of organisation among rural working class on farms in the Worcester District of the Western Cape". Conference Paper for the "Western Cape: Roots and Realities". University of Cape Town 1986.

Although all of the farm workers were Afrikaans-speaking I did not encounter many language problems, due to the assistance of an Afrikaans speaking (coloured and male) assistant. The information gathered through the interviews was very specific, coming from ordinary people on the ground, who are not used to being 'surveyed'. The research was conducted over a two month period from December 1994 and January 1995.[10] Thirty-three workers on eight farms (A-H) were interviewed. The farms are either wine, fruit, vegetable or horse breeding farms in the Wellington and Robertson district. In the following, the farms are referred to as farm A, B, C and so on. This applies also to the farmers and managers. Farm A is a wine farm in Wellington and comprises about twenty permanent male workers. Since women do not work in winter they are usually not regarded as permanent staff. This makes them far more vulnerable. Farms B and C are also situated in Wellington and have managers and, along with Farm A, the same owner. Farms D-H are situated in the Robertson district. Farms D and G grow vegetables while E and F are also wine farms. Farm H is a horse-breeding farm.

Farms A-C were contacted by a person known to the farmer who had previously done voter education with the workers. Farms D-H were not contacted specifically as a minister led the researcher to houses where people had already returned from work or did not work any more. Therefore, the farms were not chosen due to a certain selection criteria, but rather chosen randomly. Closed and open ended questions were employed. The first part of the questionnaire comprised questions concerning living and working conditions. The second part dealt with the religious lives of the workers. Although the interviews were structured some of the questions had to be explained. The interviews with ministers and community workers were not strictly scheduled and often informal to help getting closer to their perceptions. Nevertheless, the interviewing method gave

[10] Interviews were conducted 12/13 December 1994, 10 January/16 January 1995.

space for discussing and asking for more details. The answers were recorded in short-hand writing and the intrusion of a tape recorder was avoided. The research paradigm also offered the interviewees and interviewers the chance to raise additional concerns.[11]

It was the aim of the research project to collect information on the social and religious life of farm workers. The data obtained is very subjective and personal. The purpose was to listen to and understand workers' perceptions of work and religion. Personal encounters, for instance, facilitated hereby. That this method may be biased has to be taken into account. In order to minimise the possibility of bias the farm workers, as well as ministers and community workers, were asked the same or similar questions. Nevertheless, the 'truth' is always relative and never objective.[12]

Karl Plummer identifies three aspects of bias that have to be considered[13]:

1. That of the 'subjects' - the interviewees;
2. that of the researcher;
3. and that arising from the relation between the interviewees and the interviewer:

It was the first goal to speak to at least twenty-five to thirty workers from at least three different farms. This has been achieved. As mentioned earlier, farmer A and managers B-C had to give their permission for the interviews. They selected the workers loosely.[14] Since the interviews were restricted to after working hours, they were an extra time burden to the workers, especially to the women who still had to do their household chores.

Secondly, it is important to acknowledge that interviewers can become a negative fac-

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[11] Cf. Mayson, D.: "The Rural Foundation, Management and Changes on Fruit Farms: A Case Study of Selected Farms in the Egin Area". MA-Thesis. Cape Town: University of Cape Town 1990, 14f.

[12] Cf. Plummer, K.: "Doing of Life Histories". England 1983, 103f. He argues that to reduce the bias as far as possible "it presumes a 'real truth'...Any myth found in...a disembodied neutralised context must be very odd indeed. It is precisely through these sources of bias that a 'truth' comes to be assembled". (ibid 104).

[13] Cf. ibid 102.

[14] The fact of being chosen by the farmer might have made the workers very cautious in their answers regarding questions about trade unions and conditions on the farms.

tor when they attempt to obtain valid information. The researcher is white and female, has a different (German) mother tongue and comes from a different cultural background. She is an outsider and, as it was the case on farms A-C, the farmer and managers informed their workers about the research project beforehand. This possibly made the researcher appear to be related to the farmer. The workers might also have feared that my interviews were not anonymous even though they were assured of that repeatedly. Interesting is that the answers the researcher's assistant obtained were often more 'deeper' and specific.

Thirdly, the possibility exists there that the interviews in farmer A's house were also biased. Although the farmer and the managers were not present during the interviews, they might have been at least an invisible burden. The house is not a place farm workers normally enter. They might have also suspected that the researcher would inform the farmer about the outcome of the interviews. Almost contrary to this experience was the attitude of the minister in Robertson who simply introduced us to the people and left.

Although many difficulties were experienced while trying to gather reliable information from the workers, a variety of useful qualitative and quantitative data were obtained. In the light of the research set-up the quantitative descriptive data can be viewed as reliable. The question is whether the qualitative personal information can be related to the theoretical thesis. As would be expected, the data obtained confirmed aspects of the theory the researcher pursues in this thesis. The results confirmed broadly that

(1) farm workers are among the most exploited and disadvantaged workers' groups in South Africa;

(2) religion is a central aspect of farm workers' lives in the Western Cape;

(3) paternalism and dependency are inter-related;

(4) farm workers are to a far lesser extent than other workers conscious and critical of their situation; and

(5) participation in religious life and in churches does not necessarily bring about changes on farms.

Nevertheless, it should be clear that the collected information alone cannot verify or disprove a theory. Personal experiences themselves do never validate a concept. It was rather the researcher's goal to show how, to a certain extent, conditions and relationships on farms, such as disempowerment, dependency, exploitation and paternalism are experienced and related to religious life. It pursues the question of how farm workers, unconsciously or not, experience alienation.

With the *empirical methodology* outlined, the next step tries to explain the *conceptual* or *theoretical methodology* as the framework in which the religious experiences of farm workers and related patterns of paternalism are to be analysed. Socio-economic conditions are, therefore, also very important. The role of the churches is included. While the thesis seeks primarily an analytical interpretation of churches' attitudes, the theoretical method does not exclude theological reflection. The social and religious analysis forms the basis for theological reflection. James Cochrane argues in this regard that

> "(t)he church is a human community and as such can be understood in the same way as any other human community...".[15]

Social analysis can either aim to understand a certain situation - in an academic sense often very abstract - or it can help in developing what Joe Holland calls a "pastoral ap-

[15] Cochrane, J.R.: "Servants of power: the Role of English-speaking Churches in South Africa. 1903-1930: Towards a critical theology and historical analysis of the Anglican and Methodist Churches". New York: Orbis Books 1987, 19.

proach"[16]. By discussing practical action in a social and historical situation, Holland thinks of a circle that consists of different aspects as seen in *insertion*, *social analysis*, *theological reflection* and *pastoral planning.*[17] Furthermore, it is important to understand that social analysis and theological reflection are not contradictions but rather two sides of the same coin. Joe Holland writes that

> "(s)ocial analysis is the instrument or tool we use to clear away the lies, the blindness, the confusion and propaganda so that faith can discern the movement of the Spirit and indeed the forces of evil in our world today."[18]

Theological reflection is in this light seen as the effort to link the experiences of farm workers with the "living faith, churches' social teaching and the resources of tradition"[19]. Insertion, as Holland calls the first step of his pastoral approach, refers to people's feelings and how they perceive their situation. This should be the point of departure if Christians engage themselves into a "holistic approach" in theology "which refuses to reduce its concerns to the atomised individual or family".[20] After a detailed social and theological analysis, the final step in the circle of pastoral action is to look at its practical implications. The pastoral practice in the churches must reflect the social and theological analysis. This is never a static event but should be open to continuous reflection and renewed action.

In this outline of the theoretical methodology, it is not simply the analysis of social conditions on farms and its relevance to religious experiences that is important. The question of how alienation and paternalism relate to the nature of the relationship be-

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[16] Cf. Holland, J. & Henriot, P.: "Social Analysis: Living Faith and Justice". New York: Orbis Books 1984, 7.
[17] Cf. ibid 8.
[18] Nolan, A. & Broderick, R.F.: "To Nourish the Faith: The Theology of Liberation". Hilton: Order of Preachers 1987, 57.
[19] Holland & Henriot 1984, 9.
[20] Cochrane, J., De Gruchy, J. & Peterson, R.: "In Word and Deed. Towards a Practical Theology of Social Transformation. A Framework for Reflection and Training." Pietermaritzburg: Cluster Publications 1991, 8.

tween workers and farmers also needs to be considered.

Compared with other regions in South Africa where, until recently, labour tenancy and share-cropping existed, it is important to remember that on the fruit and wine farms of the Western Cape capitalist relationships have existed since the times of slavery.[21] Within this context, farm workers often own only their labour ability and not the 'means of production'. The capitalist farmer, instead, owns everything on the farms – the land, the houses and the machines. Many often also pretend to own the workers themselves. The labour done and paid for is, for most of the workers, the only means of survival. They lack skills to work in jobs elsewhere.

[21] James, W.G. & Simons, M.: "The Angry Divied. Social and economic history of the Western Cape." Cape Town & Johannesburg, David Philip 1989.

CHAPTER ONE

A CASE STUDY ON THE SOCIAL CONTEXT AND RELIGIOUS LIFE OF FARM WORKERS

This chapter offers the basis for the proposed thesis. It analysis extensive interviews with thirty-three farm workers in consultation with ministers and community workers. Social and religious profiles of workers, together with an analysis of the data, will be put in relation to the proposed thesis: Are the religious experiences of farm workers and the paternalistic relationships on farms, between farmer and workers, inter-related? If paternalism is to be regarded as a form of alienation, is it the same kind of alienation experienced by urban workers?

A SOCIAL PROFILE

The first part of the chapter offers a social profile of the interviewed workers from different farms in the Wellington and Robertson district of the Western Cape. Social conditions influence most aspects of life and thus provide the necessary basis for an analysis of the religious experience of farm workers. The collected data is of limited quantitative character and offers a basic understanding of conditions on wine and fruit farms. The social profile is based on aspects such as age and gender, education, wages, family and work status as well as social activities.

AGE AND GENDER

- The age ranged from twenty-one to seventy-four years. The average age was thirty. All interviewees were coloured[22] - seventeen of them are female and sixteen male;

[22] African workers in the Western Cape are rare, being either seasonal employees or migrants and/or do not stay on the farms.

- Child labour on wine and fruit farms is common. On the surveyed farms the youngest worker worked already for several years on the farm.

EDUCATION

- The assumption of a low level of education among the rural working class can be confirmed in the case of farms A-H;
- none of the workers reached matric level; eleven women and men (7/4) did not attend school at all;
- the average level of formal education ranged from Sub A to Standard 8 - women passed Standard 1 and men Standard 3. The most qualified female worker had completed Standard 6 (farm A) and the most qualified qualified male worker Standard 8 (farm G);
- all workers were unskilled except the drivers;
- no other skills could be obtained on the farms;
- the low educational level on farms may also be seen as one of the reasons for the lack of awareness among farm workers. Being unskilled suggests also the availability of less opportunities for finding a better paid job elsewhere;[23]
- finally, the low level of education on farms has different roots. The practice of child labour, which forces children to leave school early to contribute to the household and the farm, is one important reason. Furthermore, low wages and a lack of transport to distant farms and places makes it difficult to reach any school other than primary school. The lack of education on the side of the parents is another contributing factor. The children receive less support at home.

WORK DESCRIPTION AND WORK CONDITIONS

- There were three categories of workers on the farms: foremen; 'general workers',

[23] The minister commented that many workers would try to escape from the farms but soon had to realise that there was no work and accommodation for them outside. Working conditions, a scheduled day, for example and the whole context differ substantially.

performing various tasks; and drivers. Of the sixteen working women, six were working in the vineyard, five were packers, one sorted out fruit, two worked with vegetables, one worked as a domestic and one woman was working in the farm's creche. Of the fourteen male interviewees six worked in the vineyard, three in the fruit garden, two worked as gardeners and three were drivers.

- One man and one woman were seasonal workers. All others were permanent staff. Women stayed on the farms for the whole year, yet they were not considered permanent staff because there was no work for them in winter. This makes woman even more vulnerable.[24]
- Among the interviewees was one pensioner. One person received a disability grant while another man did not want to work.
- The period of employment ranged from three weeks (three temporary workers) to forty-four years. The average length of employment was 8,5 years. One women could not specify the length of her stay on the farm.
- Working hours on farms A-C are from 6.00 am to 5.30 pm five days a week. On farms D-H working hours extended from sunrise to sunset. Women usually started working half an hour later than men.
- In the harvest season overtime is common. On farms A-C, workers are normally paid for extra work. Leave is granted on Christmas, New Year and Good Friday.
- The period of employment on the farm and the wages correlated in general – the longer a man was employed, the higher his wage. This policy did not apply to women.
- Workers on farms A-C were paid cash weekly or daily while in Robertson they were paid only every fortnight. Farms B and C's workers also received fruit surplus from time to time and, on farms D-H, meat and vegetables.
- A bonus was granted to workers annually in June.
- Although there was no dop-system on farms A-C and E, G and H, alcoholism, espe-

[24] Cf. on this aspect the study of Hill-Lanz, S.: "Women on Farms. A Report on Women Farmworkers in the Western Cape". Pretoria: Lawyers for Human Rights 1994.

cially on weekends, was very common. Farms D and F retained the dop-system.

- Workers were often forced to buy their groceries from (expensive) farm shops because working hours and low payment left only Saturdays for shopping. The wages thus remained almost entirely on the farms.
- Living conditions on farms with the dop-system were generally worse, although interestingly, housing conditions on Farms A-C (no dop-system) were not really better. This implies that the demolition of the dop-system does not necessarily mean a higher degree of care on the side of the farmer.

WAGE PACKAGE

- Farms A-C provided free housing and electricity and primary school facilities. Farm D-H's children attended a Uniting Reformed Church school. In Wellington, school premises were also used for community and church purposes. Creche facilities existed only in the Robertson district.
- The wages clearly verify the inequalities between men and women on farms. The wages varied from R60-105 a week. The average female income was only R 65.70 while their male counterparts earned on average R 90.37 per week. The total average was R 78. The highest paid women earned only R 70 while the highest paid man received R 105.
- In case of sickness the farmers send the workers to a doctor or clinic.
- Transport to churches in Wellington is provided each Sunday.[25]
- A domestic who worked in Farmer A's house visits the workers on a regular basis to educate them about birth control and other health matters. She also offered a needle group in winter for the (then) unemployed women. This initiative came from the farmer A's wife.
- Work related grievances are only carefully raised. A driver and a vineyard worker

[25] Transport is, according to the minister in Robertson, often decisive in determining workers' religiosity. If the farmer is not interested in promoting religious life the church attendance is in general poorer.

from Wellington complained that their wages were too low and the farm shop too expensive. Very few of the interviewed workers from Robertson condemned the evils of the dop-system. Among those critical were former alcoholics. They were those who had overcome alcoholism and were members of the *Christelike Alkoholiste Bond* (CAB), a Christian self-help group of alcoholics, and criticised the farmers for being involved in their churches and yet unwilling to abolish the dop-system.

- In conclusion, criticism was raised only by the few who had overcome alcoholism and were aware of the evils of the dop-system. These people were also in a position to link religious life and the action of the farmer. This was, however, the exception.

FAMILY STATUS

- 64% of the workers were married and lived on the farms with their spouses and families, which in most cases includes also older relatives. Twelve workers were single and/or lived unmarried with a partner.
- Most of the children stayed with their parent(s) on the farm. They were often dependants from previous relationships. The number of children per family ranged from one to ten. On average there were four children per family.
- Consequently, low living and working conditions and widespread alcoholism explain a higher sickness and mortality rate among children and adults on farms. These conditions might also explain school and social problems.

SOCIAL ACTIVITIES

- Many of the interviewees were confused as to whether there were any (social) activities on the farms and if so, of what kind they were.
- The question concerning each person's activities in the community was hardly specified. When asked again, most said it meant they were living in a community and had contact with others. 36.4% stated they were active, while 63.6 % of the workers said they were not.
- Most women were at home in winter and active only in those activities that were offered by the domestic and the women's club. Men were only active in sports (marathon running, fishing and rugby).
- The thesis therefore proposes that the lack of knowledge of activities on the farms may attribute to a lack of community among the workers.

CONCLUSION

After an in-depth analysis, it has become evident that the interviews with regard to socio-economic conditions on farms in the Wellington and Robertson districts confirm previous findings of other researchers.[26] The socio-economic living and working conditions on farms remain very counter-productive and exploitative. They contribute to a number of related social ills such as alcoholism, abuse of women and children and illiteracy. Farms A-C have to be regarded as average farms in terms of conditions. The owners displayed a liberal attitude, for example by inviting Matla Trust, an organisation doing voter education, to train their workers in the pre-election period and by training a domestic to visit and teach the other workers. Yet looking at the living and working conditions of 'their' workers, they were no better off than those on more 'conservative' farms. However, the conditions on the farms varied according to the

[26] Cf. for example Mayson 1986 & 1990; Du Toit 1992; Murray 1993.

existence of the dop-system or the easy access to alcohol from shebeens.

This social profile is important for the analysis of religious experiences of farm workers, because it helps to understand the contexts and conditions that pastoral actions have to face. The conditions on farms in the Western Cape have to be examined carefully as they hold a key to an understanding of the complex situation of rural workers. They differ widely from the context of urban workers. Farm workers are deeply influenced by poverty, illiteracy and alcoholism. Moreover, a paternalist attitude on the part of farmers influences their view of reality.

A RELIGIOUS PROFILE

To gain an understanding of farm workers' religious experiences, their religious profile has to be formulated. The quantitative data about religious experiences is evaluated thereafter. The profile draws attention to church affiliations, involvement in the different churches and financial commitment of farm workers towards the different churches.

CHURCH AFFILIATION

- Of the thirty-three interviewees, seven workers belong to a Pentecostal Church, nineteen to the Uniting Reformed Church, one to the Congregational Church, three to charismatic groupings and three to the Methodist church.
- The workers in Wellington either attended church in town or in the school building on the farm. In Robertson, all workers were able to attend church services on the farms (URC) with the exception of the Methodists who had to travel to MacGregor. Some of the workers attended also the URC services;

- Farms A-C were served either by ministers or evangelists who also conducted weekly prayer meetings. On Farms D-H the services were conducted either by elders or the URC minister. Farmer and managers pray every morning with their workers.
- A high percentage of workers (54,4%) attended church every Sunday while the rest occasionally attended Sunday service. Some went every second Sunday or, as they said, "as ek voel".
- These findings suggest an above average church attendance on the part of rural workers. The fact that the farmer prayed with workers daily contributes to the important role religion has on farms.

CONTRIBUTIONS TOWARDS THE CHURCH

- The low wage level on farms partially explains the relatively small financial contributions towards the different churches by farm workers, although the financial commitment of some workers, compared with that of other income groups, is extraordinary.
- The contributions of farm workers ranged from R 0,10 to R 20 per month and amounts to an average of R 5,40 per month. Six workers gave a tenth of their wages. Five contributed nothing because they were either not yet members or they could not afford it.

CHURCH ACTIVITIES

- When asked whether church activities existed, most of the workers gave examples such as church bazaars, singing and video evenings and other functions. Prayer meetings took place on a daily basis during the week on Farms A-C. Only on Farm F the children could attend Sunday School.

- With regard to social activities organised by churches, the interviewees on Farms A-C replied they did not know of any or mentioned only activities organised by the domestic worker from Farm A (see above). On farms D-H the *CAB* was active. This confirms the argument of one of the ministers that the church is the main, and often the only social and cultural element in the lives of farm workers.
- Church activities existed on the farms covered, but they mainly concentrated on festivities and bazaars. With the exception of the CAB, social activities, such as awareness-raising or skills-training to provide better opportunities, did not exist.

INVOLVEMENT IN THE CHURCHES

- Of the interviewed farm workers, 45,5% were engaged in official church activities and/or held positions in their churches (in a narrow sense);
- Eight workers were elders and one was a deacon. Three women were members of the sisters' union while two men were evangelists. In this capacity they also visited other farms in Wellington. Often, the elders conducted services on Sundays if no minister was available. The rest of the workers were "banksitters", as they called themselves.
- A considerable percentage of workers were actively involved in the church and prepared to invest time in official church activities. The lay preachers in Robertson are regularly trained in workshops by their minister.

CONCLUSION

The evaluated data shows a considerable involvement and personal commitment of farm workers in and towards their churches. They were generally more open and active than their urban counterparts. None of the church affiliation is prominent, although the

URC dominated. Involvement in charismatic groups is increasing, though not only among farm workers. Workers are often forced to attend other churches on their farm as transport is rare and farms and towns are far remote. This is not a problem for the workers as none displayed a negative attitude towards other denominations. The fact that many workers contribute a relatively large percentage of their wages towards the churches can be seen as an example for others.

CHAPTER TWO

DEFINING RELIGIOUS EXPERIENCES

This chapter seeks to analyse the qualitative data by examining the personal religious experiences of farm workers. The research results have to be related to the proposed thesis.

SECULAR AND RELIGIOUS ACTIVITIES

The evaluation of the activities of farm workers showed limited secular activities compared to their religious involvement. These activities are generally restricted to sports, a women's club and different functions, taking place mainly on the farms. The percentage of time spent in secular activities is very low (29%) compared with activities related to the churches such as services, prayer meetings, church bazaars and CAB meetings. No further activities were mentioned, emphasising the fact that farm workers live in a community with limited outside influence. Their relatively high religiosity contrasts with the findings of the ICT survey on urban workers.[27] A comparison shows almost the opposite: a low level of religious activities corresponds with a high degree secular involvement among urban workers, for example in trade unions, community activities, youth and primary health.

The ICT survey concludes that the level of alienation, understood as a feeling of estrangement, corresponds with a high percentage of secular activities. At the same time the survey acknowledges that there might be a "medium involvement" that links

[27] The ICT survey surprisingly emphasises the importance of the bible in workers' lives. Almost 80% of urban workers regard the bible as significant although they feel predominantly alienated from their churches. The survey concludes that *"(t)he bible is a rich source of interpretation for the worker's life, certainly of much greater significance than the liturgical or pastoral operations of the church."*

secular and religious activities.[28] The lack of secular involvement among farm workers can be linked to a number of factors. The lack of transport, long distances and time constraints make it very difficult for farm workers to move outside the farm setting; there is a lack of facilities on the farms; and a lack of education among farm workers often leads to a lack of interest in secular activities. Thus the activities offered on the farms are mainly initiated by interested farmers or ministers. This also applies to organisations working on the farms as they need the farmer's permission to be present. Activities initiated from outside are often not allowed by the farmer. Therefore, activities only exist on farms if they are initiated by the farmer or the minister. No other independent cultural events take place. On weekends, many workers are drunk.

To summarise, on the one hand, the reasons for a low degree of secular involvement cannot be attributed to a high level of religiosity and the conditions on the farms alone. The attitudes of both farmer and workers, and problems like alcoholism and lack of resources also contribute. The paternalistic approach of farmers in deciding for 'their' workers what they should do in their spare time furthers dependency. On the other hand, the high level of religiosity has also other reasons. Compared to the ICT's survey, the findings suggest a low level of alienation and a high level of religiousity. Furthermore, the religious tradition of families, who often lived on the same farm for generations, is equally important because it influences children from an early age.[29] A high level of religiosity may also be a result of alienation. One must consider that changes come very slowly to farms because of the lack of outside contact and influence and because of the lack of awareness and education. This would be required to break the cycle of dependency. Du Toit argues, therefore, that

> "... the farm is a crucially threatened community. Much of paternalist dis-

[28] Cf. ICT 1991, 15f.

[29] This was confirmed by the minister. Although he argued that these traditions are in general very strong, it happens that in the case of family alcoholism these traditions are no longer promoted and thus morality declines.

> course is concerned with the relationship between the potentially harmonious farm and that what threatens its harmony: the lazy, irresponsible, or drunken worker, with the thief, with the city lawyer, the trade unionist."[30]

Since outside contact may threaten communal life because it might challenge cultural patterns and traditions, the status quo is therefore very often re-instated. Paternalist relationships on farms may also be described as contradictory. While on the one hand, the farmer wants to maintain a position different from the workers as those over whom he rules, he, on the other hand, wishes to cultivate and define

> "... the relationship as an organic partnership... paternalism may consists of autocracy and obligation, cruelty and kindness, oppression and benevolence, exploitation and protection."[31]

This suggests that the uniform lack of secular activities is, among other reasons, also caused by the paternalist relations on farms. The more advanced a farm is, the more activities take place both on a secular and religious level. However, a tradition of being religious exists already on farms irrespective of whether they are progressive or not. Instead, the level of secular engagement, instead, is dependent on facilities as well as on the harmony on the farm. The reason for a high level of religiosity on farms, however, has yet to be established.

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[30] Du Toit 1992, 8.

[31] Newby, H.: "Paternalism and Capitalism", in: Scase, R. (ed.): "Industrial Society, Class Cleavage and Control". Great Britain: British Sociological Association, 1977, 70, cit. in: Mayson 1986, 26.

THE ROLE OF THE BIBLE - "MOOI WOORDE"

The attitude of farm workers to the bible in their daily life is very positive - "mooi woorde" as many workers stated. The qualitative data analysis shows that the bible can be regarded as the most important source of inspiration in the (religious) life of farm workers. These findings are not surprising as they emphasise the high profile of the Christian faith. Nevertheless, only a few workers explicitly relate the bible to their working life. They argue, for instance, that

> "(o)ns het baie probleme as werkers, nou moet ons 'n ander lewe leef", "die bybel sê ek moet gehoorsaam wees op die plaas."[32]

Asked for reasons, one informant said that the bible teaches respect for those in charge referring here to the farmer or 'die Baas' as he was mostly called. For other workers, the bible was rather a moral instance and a spiritual source. They made statements such as

> "Die bybel sê ons moet vir ander mense bid"; "Ons moet op die knie gaan", "die bybel help ons om op die pad te bly"; "Ons moet lief wees vir mekaar" or "Ons moet op die knee gaan."[33]

When asked whether the bible speaks explicitly about workers, 30% of the workers were unaware of any references. Only a few knew, for example, of the parable of "The Workers in the Vineyard" (Mt 20). The majority related the bible's injunctions to their moral lifestyle, such as the importance of being friendly, of praying for one's problems, of being faithful and of not drinking. The bible is regarded predominantly as a moral instance rather than socio-politically inspiring. There were no suggestions with

[32] Workers Farm B, 12.12.1994.
[33] Workers Farm E, 16.01.1995.

regard to improvement of conditions on farms.

The question of what is behind this moralistic and personal understanding of the bible is still unanswered. Although workers regard the biblical message as guidance even to aspects of life that go beyond mere private problems, like domestic violence and aspects of communal life, their understanding remains mainly on the private side of life. However, changing the way people read the bible will not necessary change attitudes. It is just the beginning of a process that needs to involve all spheres of life. Carlos Mesters is in this regard right to argue that

> "(t)he bible is supposed to start things off, to set them going; but it is not the steering wheel. You have to use it correctly. You can't expect it to do what it is not meant to do."[34]

Of course, it is questionable whether there is only one 'correct' way to read the bible. People in different contexts understand and approach the bible differently. Yet the question remains: Why is the bible so often interpreted legalistically? One of the interviewed ministers argued that farm workers would often understand the bible in a what he called 'childish way'. He attributed this to a lack of education and exposure to different ways of reading the bible. When holding services on farms, he would have to explain biblical stories in very simple terms. However, one may question why the minister did not offer different ways of reading the bible.

The bible, nevertheless, does help workers in their daily life. Some stated that God and the bible had helped them to overcome alcoholism and family problems. It would therefore appear rather arrogant to simply argue that farm workers have to read the bible more progressively in order to overcome the problems they face. Even if for an outsider the living and working conditions are really desperate and exploitative, one

[34] Mesters, C.: "The Use of the Bible in Christian Communities of the Common People", in: "The Bible and Liberation. Political and Social Hermeneutics". Ed. by Gottwald, N.K. & Horseley, R.A. Maryknoll: Orbis Books (Renewed Edition) 1993, 4.

should avoid the mistake of simply passing judgement. Simply confronting the workers with a new way of reading the bible or with a spirituality that has not been developed or initiated by the workers themselves, is also not an alternative. Farm workers' faith might appear to outsiders as an attempt to escape reality, but it is also genuine.
The research outcome shows that not only a personalist understanding of the bible exists, but also in terms of the ICT survey, a perception of the bible that promotes a so-called 'master - slave' view of reality is common. This means

> "...an interpretation of the biblical morality as encouraging obedience to the employer... A paternalistic sense of the employer's responsibility to the worker commonly accompanies this ethic."[35]

Hegel has influenced this understanding with his idea of "Religion as Source of Alienation".[36] He starts with the assumption that God is an object and a stranger in heaven.[37] For Hegel, this has caused a threefold alienation of human beings from God, from him or herself and from fellow humans. To understand the master-slave concept, it is important to look at the relation to other human beings.

> "God as object and stranger is related to people only as master... and man is his servant."[38]

This, says Hegel, leads to an understanding of life and reality that regards people as related to each other by the notion of power. Some are rulers, some are not. It is important to note that Hegel understood this view of reality as being the master imposed on people from above.[39]

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[35] ICT 1991, 7.
[36] Baum, G. : "Religion and Alienation: A Theological Reading of Sociology". New York: Paulist Press 1975, 21.
[37] Cf. ibid 22.
[38] ICT 1991, 16.
[39] Cf. Baum 1975, 14.

> "The master-slave relationship which characterizes the divine human encounter is projected upon the whole of humanity and people are made to define their realities to one another in terms of master and slave."[40]

In reflecting the role of the bible, this suggests that the spiritual and political spheres of liberation are not seen as being related. Spiritual empowerment of the private life, abstracted from work realities, takes place. Yet the conclusion that faith affects the entire life in a holistic sense is not reached.

' 'N PLEK VAN GELUK' - PERCEPTION OF THE CHURCH AND MINISTERS

The analysis of feelings and attitudes of farm workers towards churches shows how they differ from urban workers. Almost all workers stated overwhelmingly they felt happy in their churches. They gave answers such as

> "Ek voel baie gelukkig in my kerk; ek kan nie wag nie om kerk toe te gaan."[41]

An elder from Farm F said the church is a

> "... toevlug om by die Here te bly en om die Here te dien."[42]

Their reasoning was similar. The workers said that in the church they could listen to the word of God, or that they could be close to God. An elder from farm F claimed to have overcome alcoholism in 1984 after attending church services regularly. Others

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[40] Ibid 15.
[41] Worker Farm A, 12.12.1994.
[42] Worker Farm F, 16.01.1995.

referred to the shortcommings of their own life and said "ek het die kerk baie nodig."[43]

The minister of the parish is predominantly identified with the institution "church". This does not apply to the lay preachers. One of the ministers noted that the attendance of services conducted by elders is far lower than those he conducted. He is an almost unquestionable authority to many workers. Often he is also the only contact they have outside the farm.

Most of the workers are prepared to approach their minister for the most common problems on farms: alcoholism and family conflicts. Social ills can be attributed to the evil dop-system. Living conditions are restrictive, and small and overcrowded houses fail to provide space for privacy. This is often very embarrassing for a family. An elder from Farm F concludes that the dop-system should be changed because it is one of the main factors that contribute to dependency, family break-downs, and endangers the youth. Asked how the minister or the church should respond, the elder replied that the minister should influence the farmer since he also is an elder in his church. He did not believe, however, that it would help, as most of the thirty-five permanent workers themselves are actually in favour of the dop-system. Only three or four workers are against this system. To him it is the responsibility of the state to effect changes through legislation. Other problems mentioned included illiteracy which leads to dependence on others for reading the bible. Another worker raised the concern with his minister that "die geld is bitter min vir die kos"[44]. It was mostly women who approached the minister for help, since their husbands were often alcoholics and they are often at the receiving end of domestic violence.

The relationship between *drinkers* and *bekeerders* on the farms is also important. It influences the relationships within families and the broader community on the farms.

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[43] Worker Farm B, 13.12.1994.
[44] Worker Farm A, 12.12.1994.

The minister from Robertson argued that the relationship among the workers would not break down totally, since the disputes were verbal arguments. Yet the workers would simply ignore each other. This is surprising because relationships on the farms seem to be 'regulated' and determined by a feeling and desire for harmony. The conflict between *drinkers* and *bekeerders* seemed to threaten this balance. One must question, however, whether verbal arguments and ignoring each other does not also lead to division. This is confirmed by Mayson in relation to divisions and their influence on various aspects of farm life. He argues that

> "1. the relationship between the farmer becomes more civil with 'bekeerders' 2. the recreation time... is spent on things other than drunken brawls; 3. 'bekeerders' generally have a higher standard of living than 'drinkers'."[45]

The case studies confirm this trend. The social conditions on farms with the dop-system are, in general, worse. This also applies to the conditions under which alcoholics live on farms without the system, inlcuding other aspects of life such as health and education. Their attitude and 'appearance' also differs. Furthermore, the relationship between the two groups, and within the *drinkers* group, has to be understood as very brutal. It also affects gender relations. Mayson speaks of a very antagonistic context where violence is a means of survival.[46]

On the question of how ministers address the problems of farm workers, it was stated that they would speak to us with the persons concerned or pray with them together. If financial problems occurred, the minister would try to talk to the farmer directly, or he would refer to the need in sermons since he also preaches for the farmers' community from time to time. One community worker observed that ministers are also to some extent dependent on the farmer to transport the workers to church. Often the minister

[45] Mayson 1986, 16.
[46] Cf. ibid 16.

would receive vegetables, meat and fruits from the farms. The farmer might also have influence on the church council that employs the minister. The community worker concluded that one should rather be cautious of too high expectations towards ministers.

Many of the workers attend church services regularly, yet it is interesting that most of them were not addressed specifically as workers by their ministers. They would rather be approached as ordinary church members - even if only farm workers were in the audience. One worker said that his minister invited people to come and talk about problems only after the service. The minister would tell them to listen to the word of God and its message - that Jesus is the Lord. In general, the minister would tell them "wat ons moet doen"[47], including reading the bible daily and caring for others.

In conclusion, the research results show that on the surveyed farms, with the exception of one minister addressing the workers in a simplistic language, almost no special attention or service is given to farm workers. While many are illiterate or have only three or four years of school education, there were no efforts by the minister(s) to organise, for example, an adult education programme for the workers.[48]

Asked what he thought were the main problems of farm workers, one minister mentioned alcoholism and the growing 'immorality', referring to the breakdown of family structures, an increasing crime rate and the growing number of illegitimate children. Young people get involved with drugs because they often do not want to work on the farm (farm G). The minister believed that these negative developments drives people away from the churches. Although he related these problems to the conditions on the farms, he also pointed at the personal responsibility of each worker. He argued that it could not be simply the 'conditions' on the farms that force people to certain actions.

[47] Worker Farm B, 13.12.1994.
[48] In the interviews with the workers it was often necessary to explain questions as many did not understand their meaning.

This argument is important since there are also examples of strong personalities on farms who successfully overcame problems like alcoholism. A lack of awareness and education as well as the evil cycle of paternalism remain a very important contributing factor to the moral and social decline among farm workers. The individual worker retains a sense of responsibility for his or her life. Furthermore, the majority of the workers did not relate their problems to working and living conditions or exploitation, but rather to their personal immaturity. Asked what should be changed in their churches, twenty-two workers replied that the people themselves rather than the churches have to change.

> "Die mense moet verander word, nie die kerk nie. In die kerk is dit baaie mooi maar die mense is sleg."[49]

The findings confirm that some farm workers do understand that changes in their lives must be initiated by themselves. However, their reasoning does not refer to the broader socio-economic conditions. Though many do not have any ideas concerning possible changes, at least a few suggested there should be more unity in the church. Parents, for example, should encourage their children to attend Sunday School more often. The churches should also spend more time looking after the 'lost sheeps'. None of the farm workers criticised the lack of church involvement in social programmes.

Again, a comparison with urban workers offers a very different picture. Most of the workers in urban settings felt alienated because the churches do not address their work-related problems specifically. They also perceived the churches as undemocratic because

> "...clergy have too much power in determining policy and practice, and that

[49] Worker Farm F, 16.01.1995.

this militates strongly against worker participation in the Church."[50]

Karen Bloomquist's argumentation supports the findings of the ICT. Religious feelings and church attendance often differ because many workers

> "... are deeply suspicious ('phony preachers') of the gap between belief and action among church-goers ("the church is full of hypocrites"). Church is another arena where many people feel looked down on for how they dress, talk or live."[51]

Since many farm workers hold positions in their churches and are responsible for the services, rural and urban conditions differ substantially. In the case of the Robertson ministry which has sixty-three farm parishes and one township parish, it is not surprising that lay ministers have to play an important and decisive role among farm workers. Nevertheless, this does not necessarily imply that its structures are more democratic than those of churches in urban settings.

These results show that the churches are perceived predominantly in a very positive light on farms. One has to question why the close bond between the rural working class and the churches differ from that of their urban colleagues. One of the minister's arguments is useful. It suggests that the church is in fact the only cultural institution farm workers have access to and is the only social event in their small communities. It is also a deep rooted tradition to be involved in the church. The minister argued that at the beginning of his rural ministry, it was always helpful to ask the farm workers about their parents' religious life as it provided an understanding of the role religion has in the present generation. Again he emphasised that the farm is a world with its own rights. It is a close community that lacks outside influence. Farmers and workers re-

[50] ICT 1991, 14.
[51] Bloomquist, K.: "The Dream Betrayed. The Religious Challenge of the Working Class". Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1990, 43.

main in a conservative and paternalist relationship which allows changes only reluctantly and very slowly.

THE ROLE OF TRADE UNIONS

Most of the workers could not respond satisfactorily about church attitudes towards trade unions as they were either unsure or unaware of unions or afraid to talk about them. Only seven workers expressed a positive attitude, but did not specify why. One minister believed that trade unions should come to the farms as socio-economic and working conditions needed urgent attention. One of the community workers agreed but pointed at the difficulties of organising farm workers. He spoke of an evil cycle that traps workers in their present situation. It is not only the farmers but also the workers who feel threatened by union organisers. This was not simply because of fear of repression and eviction, nor due to farmers' and workers' conservative attitudes - most of the workers are either sympathetic to the National Party or are encouraged by the farmer to vote for a particular party - but related it to the desire towards harmony on the farms. This attitude is closely related to dependency and the ongoing paternalism on farms. The evil cycle is perpetuated. Mayson supports these statements. Other factors also contribute to the lack of trade union influence on farms, such as differences in urban and rural contexts, illiteracy, access controls, lack of organisers in rural areas and suspicions about outsiders.

THE INFLUENCE OF PATERNALISM ON RELIGIOUS EXPERIENCES

It is the aim of the research to seek the point where experiences of religion and experiences of paternalism as an expression of alienation cross each other. The following

section will relate the quantitative and qualitative data of workers' perceptions to aspects of paternalism. The life of the rural working-class, so is the argument, is deeply influenced by the notion of dependency. The farm context creates a situation where workers hardly have control over their own lives but are controlled by various influences. These factors create a dependency. One of the main reasons is that the working and living conditions cause a counter-productive environment which influences workers' participation and self-determination.

Dependency is often almost complete on farms. The interviews have shown that almost every sector of workers' life, be it a work-related, social or religious sector, related to the farmer or the farm. It includes, for example, the right to free housing, water and electricity, creches and primary education, transport, food supplies as well as alcohol and religion. It means that "(t)o lose your job in Western Cape farming, is to lose your home."[52]

> "Traditional paternalism is distinguished by an organic conception of the farm as a family, with the farm occupying a central position of an unchangeable authority."[53]

Du Toit's extensive research on paternalism on wine and fruit farms in the Western Cape confirms the theory that the rural working class lives in a totally controlled and different world with its own dynamics, rules and regulations. Du Toit suggests however that changes are on the way. A number of farms have joined the farm management movement initiated by the Rural Foundation and other agricultural organisations. He goes as far as to argue that

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[52] Du Toit, A.: "The Micropolitics of Paternalism - Management and the Discourse of Resistance on South African Fruit and Wine Farms", in: Journal of Southern African Studies, Vol. 9 No 2 June 1993. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 315.
[53] Ibid 314.

> "(t)oday, a revolution is taking place on the wine and fruit farms of the Western Cape."[54]

Du Toit's analysis shows that the main reasons for changes are predominantly to be found in the present (economic) crisis of South African agriculture. This crisis forces farmers to focus more on productivity. It requires a stronger emphasis on participation, training and motivation of farm workers. Desirable or not, this movement is still in the initial stages and exists mainly on very large farms. The surveyed farms in the Wellington and Robertson district are not participants as yet. They do not have joint management committees, and are still organised under the principle of a totalitarian authority - the farmer. It is reasonable to describe these farms, as many scholars do, as 'total institutions' because they limit access to any form of autonomy, to another identity or to any alternative definition of the social context.[55]

Again, the farm determines each worker's identity almost entirely. Most aspects of life are influenced by the farm. The religious sector appears to be the only place where workers can make a choice without the interference of the farmer. Looking at the results of the research so far however, it is doubtful that the totalitarian and exploitive nature of farms will really change as soon as Du Toit hopes. If workers cannot determine their own life and identity, even though they have outside influences, access to smaller or bigger towns, and radios and televisions, it is doubtful they will change their approach or experiences in the near future. This is a generation-long process. Farms leave workers with a low education rate as secondary schools are often very far and child labour in the harvest season is still required. It does not break the vicious cycle of alcoholism, dop-system and violence. Even farms who claim to be more liberal do not in a practical sense improve workers' conditions. Needle groups in winter have some

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[54] Du Toit 1992, 20.

[55] Cf. on this topic the very overview of Nasson, B.: "Bitter Harvest. Farm Schooling for Black South Africans", in: Second Carnegie Inquiry into Poverty and Development in Southern Africa. Paper No 97, Cape Town: SALDRU 1984.

value, yet fail to empower women to be more self-reliant. It might seem contradictory to argue that openness to the outside world really brings about changes as it suggests that the walls can only be broken by outside influence. Instead, would it not be helpful to look for an empowerment programme that involves both workers and farmers? This could guarantee more self-determination. Changes coming from outside might lead to disempowerment because it may be perceived as being imposed, yet new legislation concerning the rights of farm workers remains a first priority. This must be accompanied by programmes that help to empower these rural workers.

Paternalism has tremendous influence on farm workers' world views. Their understanding of reality is individually orientated and stresses a master-slave perception of human relations which influences the way they read the bible. Farms are divided into 2 groups: those who dominate (the farmer); and those who have to obey (the workers). Workers' attitudes towards churches confirm this trend of accepting structures and roles as (God) given. The authority of the churches or the minister is not questioned. This is not surprising as there is no culture of open conflict or speaking up against or disagreeing with 'authorities'. Related to paternalism, 'thinking' is not regarded as furthering the aims of the farm – the farmer is always right. Disobedience may threaten the harmony, and when asked in an informal conversation after an interview, a worker from farm A said that

> "(a)s ek my werk doen, sê die baas vir my, hy hou miskien nie ek moet nie dit doen en nie so nie. As ek dit reg maak verstaan ons mekaar."[56]

It is important to understand that the dynamics on farms also include obligations for the farmer towards the workers[57] – he must look after them. Looking at realities the farmer's obligations are, however, a matter of his or her free choice, while the workers do not have achoice. This obligation is, therefore, rather one sided.

Du Toit argues in this regard that

[56] Worker Farm C, 13.12.1994.

[57] An elder from Robertson believed the farmer, as a Christian and church council member, has a duty to change his attitude towards the dop-system.

> "(f)arm membership implies mutual obligations. Workers can do and do make important claims on farmers. But there is a fundamental assymetry in the relationship. If the white farmer refuses to recognise a specific duty - no matter how sanctioned it is by traditions – it is he who will have the final word." [58]

Finally, in order to understand the tradition of paternalism and it's influences on the religious life of farm workers, it is important to look more specifically at the question of what shapes a person's identity. Farm workers live in a context with only one identity. Unlike those outside the farm, working, religious and social identities are not separated, locally or socially, but bound together. On the farms, no aspect of life is independent from another. It is the aim of the next chapters to look more specifically and rather theoretically at aspects of work, alienation and religion. Different concepts on work and working will be examined. This includes biblical, theological and sociological approaches. It questions how work, alienation and religion influence each other and will hopefully assist to develop a relevant pastoral approach towards the plights of rural workers.

[58] Du Toit 193, 322.

CHAPTER THREE

"EXPLOITING AND YET ENRICHING" - SOME BIBLICAL COMMENTS ON WORK

This research describes the experiences of work, religion and alienation among farm workers on a number of farms in the Wellington and Robertson district of the Western Cape. The findings generated through the fieldwork confirmed other researchers' studies on socio-economic conditions on farms. The influence and meaning of religion to farm workers, however, has not yet been explored.

This chapter provides the biblical foundation for the proposed thesis. It engages in an examination of experiences of work, religion and alienation on a biblical level. This perspective focuses on the Exodus movement and a New Testament parable. In particular, the situation of the Israelites in Egypt (Ex 5) and the parable of the "Workers in the Vineyard" (Mt 20) are analysed.

The previous chapters laid the basis for a theoretical approach towards the thesis to be argued for. The material was compiled with the help of extensive interviews as well as the description of local religious experiences. It means to listen carefully to the accounts of rural workers. The case studies, based on interviews with farm workers in the Western Cape, showed that this workers' group lives under conditions that create or support the emergence of dependency and ignorance. However, despite inhuman conditions, a significant feature is the deep religious life on farms. To summarise, it has been argued that personal faith either counters the exploitative conditions on farms or makes them at least more bearable. In other words, alienating working conditions facilitate a deep religious life that satisfies or fulfils human (religious) needs. This also

confirms the notion of religion being ambiguous. What appears to outsiders as conservative and corroborating the status quo, is in fact enriching farm workers. Thus, to establish a relevant ministry to farm workers, churches and individuals need to learn and understand the interface between work, religion and alienation.

The assumption that farm workers internalise the paternalistic approach of many farmers is supported by the almost non-existent level of awareness and union organising – compared to, for example, urban workers. However, the evaluation of the research data showed that these workers are not necessarily 'disgruntled' with their situation. They mentioned satisfaction with their churches and their own religious life. However critical one's opinion is, it would be arrogant to simply disqualify these religious experiences as moralistic and apolitical.

In the following chapter, it is argued that a basic understanding of different concepts on work and its conflicts is necessary to develop a new practice on farms. At least in the opinion of the researcher, many churches have failed in their task to offer a relevant ministry based on the needs of this neglected group of rural workers, who are the dominating membership group of churches' constituency in rural areas in the Western Cape and elsewhere.

Work has many shapes. A relevant approach needs to reflect a number of aspects. It is important that the ambiguity of religion is manifested in the twofold understanding of work as a mandate of God and a call to stewardship as well as a Christian task. Work becomes a curse if it is abused and used destructively to exploit workers rather than constructively.

> "...we cannot avoid the responsibility of developing a theology of work which begins with workers directly. They need to write it, or at least provide the ex-

perimental interpretation which could guide and control the ministry ..."[59]

Juros argues for a "theology of working" rather than for a "theology of work". Since it requires a human to work, "a theology of human work is, in the end, a theology of the working person."[60] Hence, it would be more appropriate to speak of a "theology of working" that involves human efforts and commitment in order to be productive and creative. With this differentiation it becomes clear what is at stake. Work is not an abstract occupation but involves human feelings and efforts.

BIBLICAL HERMENEUTICS

In the following, two different understandings of work, religion and alienation are discussed: Ex 5:1ff. and Mt 20:1ff. These are stories of injustice that are experienced in ancient biblical times, but are still relevant, where workers face various patterns of exploitation. The understanding of the bible in a context of alienation, in a context that leaves behind often the most invisible people – poor, illiterate and apparently apolitical requires listenning carefully to the poor and oppressed.

The findings of the research showed that the bible is very significant for workers' life. Its stories are considered a source of strength, encouragement, morality and spontaneity. To a large extent, the interviewed farm workers believed the bible is a very legalistic and moralistic book that offers strict guidelines for one's life. It encourages the individual worker to develop a morality that is divorced from any socio-economic issues. Closely related is the attitude of many farmers that encourages workers religious lives by providing transport to distant churches or praying daily with the workers, for in-

[59] Cochrane, J.R.: "Already but not yet: Programmatic Notes For A Theology of Work", in: "The Threefold Cord. Theology, Work and Labour." Ed. by Cochrane, J.R. & West, G.O. Pietermaritzburg: Cluster Publications 1991a, 181.

[60] Cf. Juros, H.: "The Object of the Theology of Work" in: Communio (USA), Vol. 11, 1984 Summer, 136 who states that "a theology of human work is, in the end, a theology of the working person." (ibid).

stance. However, this is only practised if it does not interfere and disturb the harmony and interest of the farm. The personalist individual approach serves the paternalist attitude of many farmers.

J. Cochrane describes the bible as probably "...the only source of theology for most members of our churches...", and continues that

> "... the bible is not a neutral text offering some clearly defined truth for all to read, about which no problems of interpretation will emerge. Who reads the bible will have as much impact on a theological judgement as will the text itself."[61]

Within theological analysis, there are various ways of reading and interpreting the bible. The trained theologian may apply different skills to read a text. He or she relies mostly on historical tools and questions, sociological ideas and insights as well as other theoretical approaches.[62] Since the message of a story requires a careful study of the text and its historical and sociological context, an answer to the interface of work, religion and alienation among this particular workers group can only be attempted by a careful study.[63]

Various stories about workers and their experiences the Old Testament's example of Ex 5:1ff. highlights the Israelites in Egyptian exile and their experiences with forced labour and the power institutions of Egypt. The Kingdom of God and its meaning to equality and solidarity among workers in an alienating context is portrayed in the New Testament example of Mt 20:1ff – the parable of "the Workers in the Vineyard". Cochrane is certainly right to argue that

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[61] Cochrane 1991a, 182.
[62] Cf. ibid 182.
[63] West,G.O.: "Contextual Bible Study". Pietermaritzburg: Cluster Publications. 1993. 24.

> "(l)abour, where it provides the opportunity to achieve a fulfilled meaningful life, is at the same time toil..."[64]

Each part of the Old and New Testament section discusses the context of the stories and its relevance to the current situation of crisis and exploitation among farm workers. At first, it is important to clarify the researchers' own (theological) position. Like Cochrane earlier, G. West suggests that

> "hermeneutics in the more recent sense of the term begins with the recognition that historical conditioning is two-sided: the modern interpreter, no less that the text stands in a given historical context and tradition."[65]

The contextualisation of a text and the interpretation of our context is not an absolute doctrine but rather helps to discover one's own limitation. Only then can a meaningful and relevant interpretation be conducted. A farm worker will read the bible differently than a trained biblical reader or theologian like the author who is a white middle-class woman from a German cultural context.

THE LABOUR CONFLICT IN EGYPT

Different definitions of labour exists throughout the Old Testament. Many authors of different contexts wrote about work from their own theological perspective. To give one example, Gen 3 reflects on the "ambiguity of labour",[66] Adam and Eve's disobe-

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[64] Wittenberg, G.H.: "Old Testament Perspectives om Labour", in: The Threefold Cord 1991a, 93.
[65] Thielton, A.C.: "The Two Horizons: New Testament Hermeneutics and Philosophical Description With Special Reference To Heidegger, Bultmann, Gadamer, and Wittgenstein." Grand Rapids: Eerdmanns 1980, 11, quoted in: West, G.O.: "Biblical Hermeneutics of Liberation. Modes of Reading the Bible in the South African Context". Pietermaritzburg: Cluster Publications 1991, 43.
[66] Wittenberg 1991a, 93.

dience as the first human sin. It highlights the ambiguity of labour as meaningful, yet painful.

The book of Exodus, particularly in chapter 5, reflects on experiences of slavery and forced labour. The Exodus is a very, if not the most important paradigm throughout the Old Testament. God led Israel out of slavery in Egypt into the promised land. The biblical paradigm is one of hope.

> "The retelling of this story gave them new hope. The story helped them to recognise their problem and their oppressor, but the story also helped them to renew their faith in their God and to find answers to their deepest questions."[67]

In other words, the Exodus is, as Gustavo Gutierrez puts it,

> "...the breaking away from a situation of despoliation and misery and the beginning of the construction of a just and fraternal society. It is the suppression of disorder and the creation of a new order."[68]

Discerning Yahweh as the God of Israel, the biblical narrative shows clearly that God is the only one who can bring change and liberation. Exodus 5 elaborates on the intention of Israel to celebrate a religious day in the desert. This occasion was also a chance for the workers to discuss political issues. Not unexpectedly, the pharaoh refused permission. Aware of the growing resistance against him, he implemented an increased workload, "(to) bring them back to their senses".[69] In this power struggle, the pharaoh devises another counter tactic. The ordinary Israelites became alienated from their leaders. He made the foremen responsible for the achievements of work goals. Failure

[67] Cf. Wittenberg, G.H.: "I Have Heard The Cry Of My People. A Study Guide To Exodus 1-15". Pietermaritzburg: Institute For the Study of the Bible 1991b, 76f. Cf. also Gutierrez, G.: "A Theology of Liberation. History, Politics and Salvation". London: SCM Press 1981, 155ff.
[68] Ibid 155.
[69] Wittenberg 1991b, 34.

was severely punished. Unable to fulfil the goals, the foremen accused the leadership, Moses and Aaron, of being responsible for their misery by challenging the authority of the pharaoh.[70] By political means, Israel could not free itself. Moses and Aaron could only turn to Yahweh and his saving acts.[71] The pharaoh had reached his goal. The Israelites unity broke up. It is from this history that chapter 5 has to be referred to as a workers' struggle.[72] Those in power had to rely on Hebrew slave to build temples and monuments. The work hierarchy consisted of ordinary Hebrew slaves and Egyptian foremen. Tensions were almost unavoidable.

The interaction of work, religion and alienation is important for the hermeneutic question. It is argued that the Israelites' experience of work shows not only signs of physical but also of psychological slavery. The divisions within the people suggest different understandings and perceptions of resistance and freedom. This assertion also has implications for workers today.

The context in Egypt has a different and complex shade. Hence, economic, political, social and religious aspects should be considered.[73] Firstly, the story shows that economic power was one of the pharaoh's main motivations. Forced labour practice is a cheap method to gain economic power. The Israelites outnumbered the Egyptians and by using these masses as well as by increasing their daily workload, the pharaoh could gain substantially.[74] So far it has been established that the Egyptian leader was, however, hiding his real intentions to alienate the Israelites from themselves, their fellow workers and leaders by claiming they were lazy workers.[75]

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[70] Cf. Ex 5:20ff.

[71] Cf. Wittenberg 1991b, 35. Wittenberg is right to speak of a moment of 'kairos' - a time to act, a time to cry to Yahweh.

[72] Cf. ibid, 33. Cf. also Wittenberg 1991a, 99. Also Kegler, J.: "Arbeitskampfformen im Alten Testament", in: Schottroff, L. & W. (Hg.): "Mitarbeiter der Schöpfung. Bibel und Arbeitswelt". München: Christian Kaiser Verlag 1993, 59.

[73] Cf. "I will send you to pharaoh. Bible Studies on Ex 1-15". Ed. by Nürnberger, M., Pietermaritzburg: Institute for the Study of the Bible, 1991, 43ff.

[74] Cf. Ex 5:4.7-8.

[75] Cf. Wittenberg 1991b, 34.

As J.A. Sogin argues, the work system was not meant to

> "... earn a living... (but as) work to which individuals and communities alike were unrelated and had to be, therefore, forced, because its aims were unimportant or even unknown to them."[76]

Secondly, from a political point of view, the Israelites were powerless. They lacked political power and were not really in control of their lives.[77] For instance, they could only complain to the pharaoh directly.[78] Besides, to cause further division among the Israelites, it is important that

> "(t)hose who have power want to keep it. One of the ways of keeping power was to make the other party look stupid or evil: propaganda... (V 9)."[79]

Power is an ambiguity and a paradox. Though not negative, it is susceptible to abuse. It can become an evil in society. From this point of view, it is argued that the religious holiday is linked to politics because the oppressed Israelites could organise themselves and plan further action. [80]

Thirdly, from a social perspective, the key to the text lies in the dynamics within the slaves' community. The analysis of the text showed that the propaganda of the pharaoh had been internalised by the Hebrew foremen. They did not realise that they were abused as an instrument of power. It emphasizes the argument that some of the workers and the foremen are both physically and mentally enslaved. In a context of exploitation

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[76] Soggin, J.A.: "Compulsory Labour under David and Solomon", in: Ishida, T.: "Studies in the period of David and Solomon and other essays". Tokyo: Yamahara-Shuppuusha 1982, 259.
[77] Cf. Ex 5:6-9.17-19.
[78] Cf. Ex 5:15.
[79] Nürnberger 1991, 48.
[80] Cf. Wittenberg 1991b, 34.

and power struggle, the oppressed became estranged and alienated from each other. However, the focus should not only be on the oppressor, but also the oppressed and their leadership. G. Pixley develops the reasonable idea that

> "...Yahweh and Moses work miracles before the Pharaoh with the people reduced to the role of spectators."[81]

However remarkable the role of Moses and Aaron, some workers did not identify with the resistance methods of their leaders. One has to ask if they were involved in the decision-making process at all. Did undemocratic behaviour cause alienation? Surely, dehumanizing conditions contribute to a lack of awareness and yet leaders have to work and consult with their constituency.

From another perspective, the religious side, the story emphasises again the impact of worship and belief on community relations. Exodus 5 refers to Yahweh as the redeemer who is on the side of the weakest, the Israelites. This caused a conflict between the Egyptians' and the Hebrews' religion. Israel could not worship openly, because the pharaoh perceived them as a threat. For the Egyptians he was a God on earth and no other God could be allowed next to him. Wittenberg develops the idea that the Hebrews were

> "... low class people, slaves, outcasts, people living on the fringe of society. How could they dare to claim that their God was so important that Pharaoh should obey them."[82]

Finally, human attempts to liberate Israel from oppression failed in this biblical paradigm. The narrative shows that other than human measures are needed to bring about effective change and renewal. The God of Israel, argues Gutierrez, is "the God of his-

[81] Pixley, G.V.: "In what sense did Yahwe bring Israel out of Egypt?", in: The Bible and Liberation 1993, 90.
[82] Wittenberg 1991b, 34.

tory and political liberation more than he is the God of nature."[83]

> "Yahweh gets involved on the side of the oppressed and starts to subvert the system through the plagues."[84]

To relate the story to the experiences of farm workers today, the dependency between work, religion and alienation is the main key. The notion of harmony and tradition are very important aspects of farm life and any interference is perceived as a threat to a rather vague balance. It has been analysed earlier that paternalism on farms creates dependency between farmer and workers which forces everyone in a certain role. Yet the relationship is not equally balanced because the main burden to comply with the rules lies on the workers. Hence, many workers feel changes threaten their (dependent) situation. Furthermore, often slavery-like working conditions on farms are similar to those in Egypt. All aspects of life are dependent on the mercy of the farmer. To draw a comparison between the biblical paradigm and the context of farm workers is therefore reasonable. Both workers' groups felt threatened by change. Moses' and Aaron's interference caused pain. With his political and economic power ambitions however, the Pharaoh is the real perpetrator. Nevertheless, it shows also that leaders must consult carefully with the oppressed. This might not have been the case with Moses and Aaron.

Liberation of the mind has to be initiated from within the community, or it will not be a real liberation – that is the message of the text to the current situation of farm workers. Any rural ministry, or any changes in general, can only come from the people themselves. Interference from outside, be it new labour legislations or trade union involvement, for instance, cannot be accomplished if the minds of the people are not liberated. They have to realise that they are being exploited. The churches may be the only source of change because of the closeness of many workers to religion and its in-

[83] Gutierrez 1981, 157.
[84] Wittemberg 1991a, 100.

stitutions. Ministers and church workers are not strangers and have relatively free access to farms, which is a very important aspect of involvement with rural workers. Human attempts, however limited they may be, are a definite beginning.

"YOU HAVE MADE THEM EQUAL TO US" (Mt 20:1-16) - THE PARABLE OF THE WORKERS IN THE VINEYARD

The experiences of the Israelites with forced labour practices and its influences on their attitudes in the Moses era in Egypt is not the only biblical example of a labour conflict. The New Testament holds several other examples of workers' hardships. Many biblical stories speak of workers like housefathers and - wives, shepherds, fishers, farmers, businessmen, custom collectors and slaves.

To understand the impact of the experiences of work, religion and alienation the well-known parable of the "Workers in the Vineyard" (Mt 20:1-16) has been analysed. It is necessary to explain the very ambiguous reality on farms where farm workers are exploited and where they live a very religious life. During the course of the research it became evident that they predominantly do not see a discrepancy between exploitative working conditions and the liberating biblical message. They do not question the status quo of their working and religious life. Farm workers have a very individualistic understanding of their faith and the bible.

The gospel of St. Matthew serves as an example for the New Testament's understanding of workers' experiences. Jesus had a specific message, particularly for the poor and oppressed. He himself was a skilled worker, a carpenter in Nazareth (Mt 13:55; Mk 6:3). Jesus related his gospel to the people in various ways. Parables were an important medium. They are one of the richest sources of Jesus' understanding of work and

workers. They demand faithfulness and point beyond the present context into the future. Their proclamation is unusual and unexpected and attracts attention. The reader is often provoked by its surprising message. The parable speaks out the impossible. This is also the case with the parable of the "Workers in the Vineyard". The story is concerned with the very common context of day labour in ancient Palestine.

> "Jesus' parables in particular give us illuminating insights into the socio-economic conditions resulting from generations of intense economic pressure: heavily indebted who cannot possibly avoid loss of their land and their freedom, tenant farmers and innumerable day labourers who have already forfeited their land or who must supplement their living by hiring themselves out."[85]

The socio-economic realities of this time were harsh, particularly for the group of casual workers in the harvest season. They were dependent on the mercy of the market and at the bottom of the employment ladder. There was also a high unemployment rate among these rural workers.[86] Furthermore, the Palestine society had a negative attitude towards day labourers and unemployment was regarded as deserved.

In contrast, farm owners were mostly rich and could employ a large labour force. St. Matthew's parable portrays a land owner who hired day labourers for his farm in the harvest season from early morning until late afternoon. The owner paid all workers equally at the end of the working day. Consequently, those who worked the longest shift complained because they felt underpaid in comparison to those who worked only for a short time. In defence, the owner questioned firmly this attitude asking in V.15f: "Am I not allowed to do what I choose with what belongs to me? Or do you begrudge

[85] Horsley, R.A.: "The Imperial Situation of Palestinian Jewish Society", in: The Bible and Liberation 1993, 403.
[86] Cf. Schottroff, L.: "Human Solidarity and the Goodness of God. The Parable of the Workers in The Vineyard", in: "God Of The Lowly. Socio-Historical Interpretations Of The Bible". Ed. by Schottroff, L. and Stegemann, W. Maryknoll: Orbis Books 1984, 130.

my generosity?"[87]

Mt 20 portrays a common socio-political set-up for workers in ancient Palestine, with one exception – the unusual and unexpected attitude and action of the farm owner. It is surprising because

> "(w)orkers would in fact be afraid that the average employer might ill-treat them by not giving them a wage proportionate to the time they had worked. The parable presupposes this..."[88]

The specific context of St. Matthew suggests that the author of the gospel did not use the parable, and according to Schottroff's argument,

> "... to explain general and even supranatural theological ideas, but rather to cope with a painful and pernicious conflict within his own community."[89]

St. Matthew, who is known to focus on the divisions in his community, emphasised the extent of solidarity with the weakest in society as a measure of love towards each other. In the author's audience was, as R.H. Smith argues, a larger group of affluent businessmen. They were people who would be "confronted by the logic of the land-owner in 20:1-16"[90]. However, the parable is directed towards those who thought to be more useful than those who were very late. They believed the others should be paid less according to their working hours. The owner's behaviour is uncommon and not the practice of the day.

> "The long-shift workers are not complaining because *here, as usually*, a part-time worker is being paid a full day's wage; they are complaining because *this*

[87] Mt 20: 1-15. Quoted from "The Holy Bible". Revised Standard Version. Great Britain: Bible Society, 1988.
[88] Schottroff 1984, 135.
[89] Ibid 139.
[90] Smith, R.H.: "Were the Early Christians Middle Class? A Sociological analysis of the New Testament", in: "The Bible and Libeeration. Political and Social Hermeneutics". Ed. by N.K. Gottwald. Maryknoll: Orbis Books 1983 (First Edition), 447.

particular employer is not following the usual practice."[91]

On the one hand, the story focuses on human relationships in society. Day labourers, as one of the most exploited workers' groups, appear to be alienated since they are 'jealous' of each other. All have to battle for their survival and that of their families. Division and lack of solidarity is a common feature. It is argued that this parable portrays the farmer as God who treats everyone equally irrespective of human achievements. No one has privileges before God as well as in the human community. Schottroff is right to argue that

> "(t)he parable intends to speak of the goodness or generosity of God (see V.15) and of the behaviour of human beings toward one another contrasted with the goodness of God (e.g. the envy and grumbling of the long-shift workers)... (the parable) is not intended as social criticism..."[92]

On the other hand, the parable focuses on human solidarity. The workers are deeply divided. The parable is not about recompense. Human efforts are not honoured by God in a sense that one becomes 'better'. God's goodness and grace towards humanity is unconditional. It signals a turn in the parable.[93] Again, Schottroff argues

> "(t)he parable is not concerned with the concept of recompense, however the latter may be concretely understood, but rather with the use of the sense of justice (which requires that recompense should match the work done) as a weapon against other human beings."[94]

The approach "You have made them equal to us" portrays an alienated and deeply di-

[91] Schottroff 1984, 135.
[92] Ibid 135f.
[93] Cf. Draper,J.: "Christ The Worker: Fact Or Fiction", in: The Threefold Cord 1991, 134.
[94] Schotttroff 1984, 137

vided society. Instead of being united, in solidarity with one another, and have a stronger stand against unfair labour practice, people turn against each other. In contrast, the employer's attitude is an example for Christian behaviour. For St. Matthew

> "...there are Christians who claim privileges in God's sight because in fact they do more than the "little ones" in the community... Their claim to privileges before God and therefore in the community as well offends against solidarity. "You are brethren." For Matthew, the measure of how seriously Christians take their faith is their behaviour towards the lowly inside and outside the community."[95]

For the aim of this thesis to establish the interface between experiences of work, religion and alienation among farm workers, the parable's focus on alienating working conditions is important. It draws a line between socio-economic conditions and workers' attiudes. Workers are alienated from their work and from their fellow workers. They lack solidarity. The context of exploitation is also familiar to farm workers today, though a comparison between pre-industrial and post-industrial societies has its limits. Low payment is only one similarity here.

The research showed that farmers and workers alike tend to view farm life as being organised like a family. "Ons verstaan mekaar" is a common approach. However, the apparent unity is based on dependency and paternalism. 'Threats' from inside and outside and conflicts between farmer and workers that might disturb 'the balance' are avoided. This seem to be one of the reason for a lack of outside contact of farm workers. In comparison, the parable focuses on human solidarity and its realisation in the Kingdom of God. God's unconditional love for all is guaranteed and there are no inequalities among people either. God demands faithfulness and solidarities and offers fundamental transformation.

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[95] Ibid 145.

CONCLUSION

To sum up the results of the biblical exegesis: There are two important features in the two stories that help understand the current crisis among farm workers. The first is concerned with the impact dehumanising working conditions have on workers, their lives and their attitude to fellow workers. Both the slaves workers in Egypt as well as the day labourers in Palestine experience estrangement from their work and fellow human beings. They have to cope with dehumanising working conditions. Unexpected and different behavioural patterns like the resistant measures of Israel's leadership and the astonishing attitude of the farm owner towards day labourers create or add to the insecurity. This often leads to individualism and a lack of solidarity. The community is no longer regarded as a source of strength but a danger to a situation that everyone was used to. The fight for survival is counterproductive to solidarity. Yet God is demanding exactly this. Only if the workers stand together, will they be able to overcome their oppression. The message still exceeds all human effort to overcome oppression. God's full liberation will ultimately come true.

The second feature concerns the unconditional love and support God provides humanity with. No human effort or achievement can 'buy' God's love. A person is not regarded 'better' if he or she achieves more than others. This is a clear message against human greed and a behaviour that favours individualism and separation.

CHAPTER FOUR

A THEOLOGICAL APPROACH ON WORK

One aspect of the proposed thesis is that the social situation and location of farm workers influences their perception of work, religion and the church as institution. The socio-economic and political deprivations of this rural workers' group have caused a kind of alienation that has apparently been compensated with a deep religious life. A sense of belonging to a religious group offers 'security' in the individual battle for survival.

The biblical paradigms that were used in the previous chapter offered various attempts to explain workers' realities in ancient times. There were signs of alienation between the ordinary slave workers and their leaders in Egyptian exile and among exploited day labourers in Galilee. Divisions among the workers had occurred. Reasons for these behavioural patterns are manifold and include the socio-economic conditions that deprived workers of their basic humanity. Yet, there was also a lack of solidarity among the workers. It can be attributed to the dehumanising conditions that made everyone an individual fighter. The relevance of the stories to the context of farm workers today lies in the importance of community and solidarity amongst workers in open leadership structures and, most importantly, in God's message of compassion with the poor and oppressed.

The unique Catholic example of *Laborem Exercens*, one of the most important papal encyclicals, is a contemporary attempt to formulate a theology of work that engages for the first time in a dialogue with Marxism.[96] It is followed by some notes on the liberation theology of Gustavo Gutierrez, the Peruvian theologian, and his ideas on the root

[96] Cf. Baum, G.: "The Priority of Labour. A Commentary on Laborem Exercens. Encyclical Letter of Pope John Paul II". New York: Paulist Press 1982, 3.

causes of alienation.

LABOREM EXERCENS - A PAPAL VIEW ON WORK

Laborem Exercens was issued on September 14, 1981 by Pope John Paul II in Rome as his third encyclical letter. It has the priority of labour over capital as its central topic. Unlike other encyclicals, this document was written by a 'labour-experienced' Pope who himself was a ordinary quarry worker in Krakow in the 1940s.[97] The papal letter

> "...introduces new ideas, derived from a critical and creative dialogue with Marxism, which allows the author to reread the Catholic tradition in a new light... Pope John Paul II permits himself to be impressed by certain Marxist insights."[98]

The encyclical examines various aspects of work and its influence on human life and assesses the effects of the prevailing capitalist economic system on societies. It is argued that the nature of capitalism did not sufficiently offer people the basic needs of existence.[99]

Laborem Exercens is highly influenced by the Polish background of John Paul II. An influential part of the local Catholic church there, and of which Karol Wojtila was a member, had an open attitude towards the communist government. This sector of the church

> "...appreciated certain positive elements, and tried to overcome the errors of

[97] Cf. ibid 93ff. Cf. also for example Hebblethwaite, P.: "The Pope And Politics: Shifting Patterns, in "Catholic Social Doctrine"", in: IDOC Bulletin, Vol 11/12 1982, 15 or Preston, R.: "Pope John Paul II On Work", in: Theology, Vol 86, 1983 January.
[98] Baum 1982, 3
[99] Cf. ibid 96f.

Marxism with arguments drawn from Christian personalism".[100]

Consequently, the letter tries to overcome the Marxist errors but remains open for a dialogue with the Marxist system.[101] It signals a major shift

> "...in the anthropological presuppositions... These presuppositions are thoroughly Marxism (though also strongly shaped by a personalist philosophy peculiar to the Pope John Paul II and his mentors)."[102]

The letter aims

> "... to highlight - perhaps more than has been done before - the fact that human work is a key, probably the essential key, to the whole social question, if we try to see the question really from the point of view of man's good. And if the solution - or rather the gradual solution - of the social question, which keeps coming up and becomes even more complex, must be sought in the direction of "making life more human", then the key, namely human work, acquires fundamental and decisive importance."[103]

The encyclical offers a complex theological view on work and its priority over capital accompanied with practical suggestions. This concept of work is relevant for the proposed thesis – that work, religion and alienation are inter-related. One of its main aspects, the anthropological definition of human beings by the objective and subjective side of work, is very important. Firstly, human beings are defined by work in an objective sense. Here the letter refers to the actual work done, work that builds, offers serv-

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[100] Ibid 3f. Another major influence was the French Catholic E. Mounier, who argued against both capitalist individualism and Marxist collectivism. He points out that in a society people have to remain subjects of their lives.
[101] Cf. ibid 3f. 5.
[102] Cochrane 1991a, 178.
[103] Baum 1982, 100.

ices, but also destroys. In other words,

> "(m)an's life is built up every day from work, from work it derives its specific dignity, but at the same time work contains the unceasing measure of human toil and suffering and also of the harm and injustice which penetrates deeply into social life within individual nations and on the international level."[104]

Secondly, in a subjective sense work is anthropologically understood as, what James Cochrane correctly describes as "the actualisation of the working person"[105]. Here he refers to the human self-fulfilment and expression as a "holistic becoming of the human being as intended by God"[106]. It was God's intention to "subdue the earth",[107] but sin destroyed the creation's 'balance', although God has provided human beings with a responsibility and a stewardship to guard the creation as God's world.

The Genesis story is the main source for *Laborem Exercens'* definition of work. Consequently, it is in the line of this argument that in his encyclical the Pope can say that human beings are subjects of work.[108] A theological concept of work must therefore focus on these subjects. If work is the main element of God's creation, to follow God's precept would be a human task. The Pope subsequently writes

> "... that by their labour they are unfolding the Creator's work, consulting the advantages of their brothers and sisters, and contributing by their personal industry to the realisation in history of the divine plan."[109]

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[104] Ibid 96.
[105] Cf. Cochrane 1991a, 178f.
[106] Baum 1982, 179.
[107] Ibid 104. In a biblical sense "... inevitably linked with toil... the original blessing of work contained in the very mystery of creation and connected with man's elevation as the image of God contrasted with the curse that sin brought with it: "Cursed is the ground because of you; in toil you shall eat of it all the days of your life." (147).
[108] Cf. 102ff. In a biblical sense the author speaks of "subduing the earth".
[109] Ibid 143.

However, the encyclical is not blind of the dangers of human domination over work, for instance, that caused by technological modernisation. Here the Pope argues that

> "... it is also a fact that in some instances technology can cease to be man's ally and become almost his enemy, as when the mechanisation of work "supplants" him, taking away all personal satisfaction and the incentive to creativity and responsibility, when it deprives many workers of their previous employment or when, through exalting the machine, it reduces man to the status of its slave."[110]

Despite the heavy burden human sin has caused, work still has a positive meaning in a sense that it contributes towards the historic building and development of society. It is also a necessity for survival. Work is thus a

> "..."transitive" activity, that is to say, an activity beginning in the human subject and directed toward an external object, presupposes a specific dominion by man over "the earth", and in its turn it confirms and develops this dominion."[111]

The theological meaning of work is determined by men and women who are the subject of work. Work defines the human being, who is rooted in work. Consequently, the interpretation of humanity and its history has work as its central focus. This is the main constant in human history. Only the sinful human nature has caused work to become a heavy burden and a tool of oppression in history.

The relevance of the letter for this thesis is emphasised by the definition of human kind as the subject of work. It is argued that human beings are not made "for work" but

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[110] Ibid 103f.
[111] Ibid 101.

work "for man"[112]. Another aspect is that work does not possess a purpose of its own, because

> "... in the final analysis it is always man who is the purpose of the work, whatever work it is that is done by man - even... as the most monotonous, even the most alienating work."[113]

However positive the human ability to resist alienation is viewed, this standpoint is questionable. It suggests that human kind remains the subject of labour despite the heavy burden that is attributed to alienation. Hence, alienation is not viewed as a total estrangement from the working environment. Work cannot become dominating. Yet, Baum comments rather uncritically that

> "(e)ven if a system of production assimilates workers as objects, they remain inwardly alive; they remain capable of criticising the conditions of labor, of organising against these conditions and of struggling for a more just economic system."[114]

A concept of alienation like the Marxist one analyses the exploited working class as having lost its subjectivity. It justifies, in Baum's view, only "deception and domination" by a class that is needed to guard the estranged working class.[115]

Not denying the possible dehumanising effects of work, the Pope speaks of a necessity for workers to organise movements of solidarity among themselves, such as trade unions. Without them social justice cannot be achieved. The task of the church in the struggle for justice and community does not simply lie in preaching an abstract justice

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[112] Cf. ibid 106.
[113] Ibid 106.
[114] Ibid 17.

or speaking on behalf of the labour movement. The encyclical points instead at the task of the church to be in solidarity with the workers as an option for the poor. The Church has to identify with the workers' plights as their own plight. Solidarity among the workers is regarded as the main tool against alienation and loss of identity. It is a particular task of the Church that demands concrete engagement among workers and

> "...will help all people to come closer, through work, to God, the Creator and Redeemer, to participate in his salvific plan for man and the world and to deepen their friendship with Christ..."[116]

The anthropological understanding implicit in *Laborem Exercens* suggests that men and women are subjects of history only through God in His divine presence. Thus, speaking of a person as subject does not offer an individualistic understanding of human beings as 'free persons', but one of humans who need God and others in order to become a subject. The actualisation of the working person includes this subjectivity.

It has to be asked if the notion of solidarity the encyclical speaks of is sufficient to overcome the effects of alienating working conditions. The balance between the creative task God has attached to human beings and the abuse of this freedom is destroyed. Is the encyclical not too vague about the really dehumanising effect alienating conditions cause? Considering the situation of farm workers, as shown by the case studies, it is difficult to imagine them joining forces as most are individual fighters for survival. Nevertheless, it should be the ultimate aim to achieve more solidarity among these rural workers.

Finally, the encyclical offers a clear understanding of work and its relevance for, and imperative to, humanity. If alienated workers want to become conscious subjects of

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[116] Ibid 142

their life, they have to realise that God wants them to actually fulfil the task to guard the creation. In practical terms, they have the right to demand decent treatment and wages, for example. And yet it is the task of the churches to empower the alienated. It is not, however, enough to simply call for social justice and for the fullness of human life and not address the problems on a practical level.

> "In order to achieve social justice in the various parts of the world, in the various countries and in the relationships between them, there is a need for ever new movements of solidarity of the workers and with the workers... whenever it is called for by the social degrading of the subject of work. ...The Church is firmly committed to this cause..."[117]

[117] Ibid 110.

A THEOLOGY OF LIBERATION - GUSTAVO GUTIERREZ' IDEA OF RADICAL CHANGE

With the increasing level of poverty and dependency in the countries of the Southern hemisphere – Africa, Asia, and Latin America – a growing number of people have not been able to earn an adequate living for themselves and their families. They are desperate and yet many have a deep religious faith. From an ecclesiological point of view, the churches failed to recognise or support the poor. Poverty was fought more spiritually. The socio-economic and political context of exploitation was not challenged until individuals realised the need to address poverty and exploitation.[118] The poor became the main constituency of many churches. One of the first individuals to address the issue of injustice was Gustavo Gutierrez, a Peruvian Catholic priest who began to realise that

> "(t)heology seems to have avoided for a long time reflecting on the conflictual character of human history, the confrontations among men, social classes, and countries."[119]

Gutierrez spoke out of his own experience. He had grown up in poverty and was long engaged in the struggle for social justice. The call for theological renewal was intended to highlight the failure of the official churches (in Latin America the Catholic Church in particular) to address the plight of the poor. Gutierrez intended to enable Christians to work towards radical changes of evil social and political structures. However, his intention went beyond mere socio-political changes. The liberation of people's minds was regarded by him as the main foundation. As he put it

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[118] Cf. Cochrane, De Gruchy & Petersen 1991, 33.

[119] Ibid 35. Or theology understood as "... a critical reflection on Christian praxis in the light of the word does not replace the other functions of theology, such as wisdom and rational knowledge; rather it presupposes and needs them". (Ibid 13)

> "...the alienated and exploited (have to) become the artisans of their own liberation and make their voices heard directly."[120]

In the light of the thesis that alienation, work and religious faith are related, Gutierrez' approach is helpful. Since he links the idea of liberation on a socio-economic as well as religious level with the notion of human sin, Gutierrez stresses the inability of human kind to free themselves. He approaches sin from two different sides. It is, firstly, an expression of personal failure and wrong-doing, but secondly, also a mirror of structural exploitation and injustice. With this twofold approach Gutierrez identifies sin as the ultimate root of alienation. Human sin and sinful structures reflect the experiences of the poor in history. Gutierrez' concept is holistic as it combines different levels of existence. He describes it as

> "...evident in oppressive structures, in the exploitation of man by man, in the domination and slavery of peoples, races, and social classes. Sin appears therefore as the fundamental alienation, the root of a situation of injustice and exploitation."[121]

Sin is the root of all oppression and alienation. Oppressive socio-economic and political structures are an expression of sin. Overcoming these structures is the ultimate Christian goal on earth. However, according to Gutierrez,

> "...a social transformation, no matter how radical it may be, does not automatically achieve the suppression of all evils..."[122]

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[120] Gutierrez, G.: "Liberation Praxis and Christian Faith", in: "Frontiers of Theology in Latin America", ed. by Gibellini, R. London: SCM Press, 1975, 24.f. See also in Gutierrez, G.: "The Power of the Poor in History", London: SCM Press, 1983, 37: "The theology of liberation is an attempt to understand the faith from within the concrete historical, liberating and subversive praxis of the poor. It is born of the struggles, the failures and the success of the oppressed themselves."

[121] Gutierrez 1981, 175. Or in other words, "...a breach of friendship with God and others - is according to the Bible the ultimate cause of poverty, injustice, and the oppression in which men live". (ibid 35)

[122] Ibid 35.

The freedom humanity receives through the cross of Jesus Christ calls for an end to human selfishness. Christ brought liberation to set human beings free through his death on the cross. It is a gift, a communion with God and fellow human beings.[123]

> "The proclamation of the gospel...takes place from within an option of real and active solidarity with the interests and struggles of the poor, the exploited classes. The attempt to situate oneself in this locus...demands a conversion to another world, a new way of understanding the faith - and it leads to the reformation of the gospel message."[124]

Similar to his understanding of sin, Gutierrez classifies liberation on different levels and from different perspectives. As Gutierrez argues here, liberation is a single process with economic, social and political implications and effects. It expresses the conflict between the oppressors and the oppressed. Secondly, speaking in the author's terminology, liberation is an expression of the desire of oppressed people to be freed from the boundaries of oppressors. He argues that

> "(a)t a deeper level, liberation can be applied to an understanding of history... the gradual conquest of true freedom leads to the creation of a new man and a qualitatively different society."[125]

And thirdly, Gutierrez regards Jesus Christ as the real and true liberator who as the saviour,

> "... liberates man from sin, which is the ultimate root of all disruption of

[123] Cf. ibid 36.
[124] Gutierrez 1983, 63.
[125] Gutierrez 1981, 36f.

> friendship and of all injustice and oppression. Christ makes man truly free, that is to say, he enables man to live in communion with him; and this is the basis for all human brotherhood."[126]

With the third level of liberation Gutierrez closes the radical cycle of liberation.[127] True liberation always remains a gift made possible only by Jesus' death on the cross, while political liberation is a temporary expression in history. Yet political liberation is an important corner stone of the realisation of the kingdom of God. Gutierrez is therefore right to argue that historic liberation and salvation are related. Further, he says that

> "... we can say that the historic, political liberating event is the growth of the Kingdom... but it is not the coming of the Kingdom, not all of salvation."[128]

Again, the author's radical approach is not blind of the misinterpretation of political liberation in history as salvation. The Kingdom of God is a part of human history. Yet true liberation is a salvatic process. True liberation is a holistic event and thus contains not only external factors but also internal or psychological dimensions. Gutierrez says, reflecting on Hegel and Freud, that

> "...we have seen (since Hegel) conflict used as...explanatory category and awareness as a step in the conquest of freedom. In Freud however they appear in a psychological process which ought to lead to a fuller liberation of man."[129]

To clarify his position in the present context, Gutierrez reminds the reader once more

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[126] Ibid 37.
[127] Interesting is the reference to one of the church fathers, St. Augustine of Hippo, who argues that the different meanings of liberation are part of a cycle: "(T)he soul under the control of sin...resembles a country subdued by the enemy." (quted ibid 42n53).
[128] Ibid 177.
[129] Ibid 30f.

of the many revolutionary attempts that led to socio-political changes, but that often failed to liberate the mind as well. He argues that

> "(t)he goal is not only better living conditions, a radical change of structures, a social revolution; it is much more: the continuous creation, never ending of a new way to be a man, a permanent cultural revolution."[130]

However, this 'new humanity' can only be reached if the oppressed are involved in their own liberation - if they are the subjects of history. This understanding of a new humanity has yet to be realised and is thus rather a future imperative of hope.[131] This utopia, as Gutierrez calls it, is "an annunciation of what is not yet, but will be the forecast of... a new society"[132]. In his words,

> "(u)topia must necessarily lead to a commitment to support the emergence of a new social consciousness and new relationships among people. Otherwise the denunciation will remain at a purely verbal level and the annunciation will be only an illusion."[133]

Gutierrez' approach is useful to understand the alienating experiences of workers at their working place. Any attempt to build a just society affects the impact of fundamental alienation has.[134] The foundation of alienation is important for further discussion.

> "Sin appears therefore, as the fundamental alienation, the root of a situation

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[130] Ibid 32. Cf. an important influence on Gutierrez on the liberation of the mind: D. Cooper's argumentation "that a cardinal failure of all past revolutions has been the dissociation of liberation on the mass social level, i.e. liberation of whole classes in economic and political terms, and liberation on the level of the individual and the concrete group in which he is directly engaged". (Ibid 31)

[131] "Nevertheless, it its necessary to recall the revolutionary process now under way is generating the kind of man who critically analyzes the present, controls his destiny, and is orientated towards the future...a new society yet to be built." Ibid 213-214.

[132] Ibid 233.

[133] Ibid 234.

[134] Ibid 177.

> of injustice and exploitation. It cannot be encountered in itself but only in concrete instances, in particular alienations."[135]

The focus on the concrete instances, the particular alienations Gutierrez speaks of helps to focus on the different expressions of sin in different areas. Instead of generalising, like *Laborem Exercens* tends to, Gutierrez enables the reader to focus on his or her particular context. The only way to encounter alienation is by liberating the efforts to build a just society. This is only possible in little steps and in the light that liberating events are only one part of human liberation.

For the situation of farm workers in South Africa, Gutierrez's message is clear. Alienation among rural workers is caused by the dependency of sinful structures and personal sin. This does not imply that by changing personal behaviour the vicious cycle of paternalism on farms can be overcome by simply changing behavioural patterns. It goes hand in hand with socio-economic and political measures.

CONCLUSION

Two major theological approaches towards work have been introduced. The first, *Laborem Exercens*, is a very general and explicit theological attempt to explain and analyse work and workers' realities. Work defines the human being as subject in God's creation. As a worker, every man and woman fulfils the God given responsibility towards the creation. This also implies a responsibility towards his or her fellow workers. In this sense human individuality is limited to the extent that *Laborem Exercens* suggests workers must stand together in solidarity in a context that denies God's creation basic rights.

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[135] Ibid 175f.

The importance of Gutierrez' approach, though not really a theological concept on work or working, lies in its conclusion that sin is the fundamental base of human alienation. Gutierrez undertook a thorough investigation into the roots and forms of sin. He speaks of personal and structural sin. My own sin and the sins against me are linked and have to be overcome and fought against. Though human kind can work towards a less sinful world, towards the establishment of the Kingdom of God, Gutierrez made it clear that every human attempt is limited. Only Jesus Christ on the cross can bring ultimate salvation and freedom from sinful structures.

Both concepts offer valuable contributions towards the proposed thesis, namely the interface between religious life and experiences of work by farm workers in the Western Cape. A deeply rooted religious, yet a private and 'ignorant' life has been identified as an expression of alienating working experiences. Alienation becomes more real and concrete if one understands it as an expression of sinful structures. They are caused by human kind and a failure to follow God's commandments. To overcome sinful structures is only possible through a fundamental change which is the ultimate Christian goal.

For the context of farm workers, the findings are relevant in a sense that they provide a deeper understanding of the reasons behind the religious expression of this particular group of workers. As it was established, life on farms is paternalistic and similar to that of a family in which the farmer is regarded as the father and the workers are treated like children. Paternalism is an expression of sinful structures on farms. This is the set-up on farms. It needs a human decision to comply with these conditions, and involves personal responsibility and decision-making skills which many farm workers lack.

CHAPTER FIVE

"A SOURCE OF FRUSTRATION" - KARL MARX CONCEPT OF WORK AND ALIENATION

To Karl Marx work and alienation and their influence on the emergence or creation of religion are central topics. Work is of primary importance because it provides human fulfilment and a meaningful life and is the main source of survival for most people. However, work causes human destruction, alienation and exploitation. The link to religion lies for Marx in the understanding that religion is a "product of man's self-alienation"[136]

> "The theory (of alienated work) is the intellectual construct in which Marx displays the devastating effects of capitalist production on human beings, on their physical and mental states and on the social processes of which they are a part."[137]

Marx' theory occurred in a rapidly changing and industrialising age. It was based on the inhuman conditions of industrial production in the 19th century and is still applicable to the working conditions today. Thus, Marx ideas are still relevant because capitalism remains the dominating economic system in the world.

> "... the great amount of work that is being done in industry and administration is still external labour, is still the source of personal frustration, a waste of human talent, and avoided like a plague except under pressure."[138]

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[136] Baum 1975, 21.
[137] Ollman, B.: "Alienation. Marx's Conception of Man in Capitalist Society". Cambridge University Press: London 1971, 31.
[138] Ibid 28.

In general, his argumentation is based on the assumption that alienation emerges within a specific socio-economic system that shapes all aspects of life. It is dependent on the availability and flow of capital and the demands of the market. Workers are part of the market forces although they do not have control over the product they produce. Consequently, workers often become alienated from this product. In the *First Manuscript* of the "Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts" Marx argues that

> "...the misery of the worker increases with the power and volume of his production; that the necessary result of competition is the accumulation of capital in a few hands, and thus a restoration of monopoly in a more terrible form; and finally the distinction between capitalist and landlord, and between agricultural labourer and industrial worker, must disappear, and the whole of society divide into the two classes of property *owners* and *propertyless* workers.[139]

Marx criticism on the terrible impacts of capitalism on work does not overshadow the positive side of work. It is alienating and yet productive. The economic system stimulates the production of goods and satisfies basic human needs, but it provides only the owner of the product with material wealth. The workers are merely the producers. It shows the ambiguity of capitalism.

The main thesis of this study is that alienating working conditions correspond with a deep religious life. It causes a high level of unconsciousness and fear of change. Hence, religion can be understood as a source of satisfaction and compensation. Characteristics for the high level of exploitation among farm workers in the Western Cape are, amongst others, low wages, lack of education as well as poor housing and health

[139] Bottomore, T.B. (Ed): "Karl Marx. Early Writings". McGraw-Hill Book Company: New York 1963, 120.

conditions. Another major outcome of the field studies was the apparent lack of consciousness and awareness about conditions among this particular rural workers' group. Furthermore, farm workers are in their majority very religious and their deep faith is primarily focused on private and personal matters, and not on the changing of socio-economic conditions.

This part of the study examines, therefore, whether Karl Marx' understanding of work, alienation and religion can offer a possible explanation for the different (in comparison to urban workers) reaction towards similar experiences of exploitation and deprivation. A feeling of estrangement from all aspects of human or social life for Marx begins with the division of work. Here he follows Adam Smith who argued in 1776 that productivity can only grow by splitting the production process.[140]

> "... doing one of these tasks - spending one's life grinding the tops of the wires - had a terrible effect on the workers themselves. Workers do not have to think or feel anything to do it."[141]

Marx believed that workers would become dehumanised under these conditions. In terms of language, he differentiated between productive and exploitive work and did not simply speak of work but refers to its negative aspects by using the term "external work" or labour. Hannah Arendt's distinction of labour as a mechanical or biological necessity, and work as something creative and productive, is appropriate in this regard.[142] Marx, in his *Third Manuscript*, followed the argument that

> "(T)he *division of labour* is the economic expression of the *social character of labour* within alienation. Or, since *labour* is only an expression of human

[140] Cf. ibid 181ff.
[141] Vorhies, F.: "Comprehending Karl Marx". Juta & Co: Kenwyn 1991, 20.
[142] Cf. Selznick, P.: "The Moral Commonwealth. Social Theory and the Promise of Community". University of California Press: Berkeley 1992, 138f.

> activity within alienation, of life activity as alienation of life, the *division of labour* is nothing but the *alienated* establishment of human activity as a *real species-activity* or *the activity of man as species-being.*"[143]

Looking at his heirs however, a sufficient answer of how to keep work productive and interesting has still to be found. Selznick argues that

> "(u)nder actually existing socialism, as under capitalism, labour has been plentiful, but work has been scarce."[144]

Marx' strong emphasis on external work is still valid. His criticism was focused on its negative abuse, not on work. However, Marx was aware that capitalism is a necessary to produce goods but that it has its downfalls because only a few can really profit from it, and this reflects the ambiguity of his concept.

If work causes alienation, it reduces and transforms humanity. This transformation of human nature is caused, among other reasons, by the lack of workers' relationship to the means of production. The product becomes an object the worker cannot identify with because he or she does not own it. This status can be described as a condition of estrangement from one's own work, personality and society. The worker puts something of him- or herself, such as energy and power, into the production process. In this regard, Marx spoke of an 'objectification' of human nature.[145] Workers have difficulties or are denied the expression of their own creativity. They get frustrated by monotonous work that is not challenging.

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[143] Bottomore 1963, 181.
[144] Selznick 1992, 139.
[145] Cf. Lash, N.: "A Matter of Hope. A theologian's reflection on the thought of KARL MARX." University of Notre Dame Press: Notre Dame 1981, 172f. "For Marx, productive labour - and hence the "objectification" of human nature, in the sense that the worker puts something of himself into his work, his product - is an absolute..." (ibid).

Marx also drew a line between human needs and material conditions. The satisfaction of human needs and the necessity of production is unquestionable. Despite alienation, human beings possess a creative potential. Human nature is transformed by material conditions or material life. It shapes and determines and is shaped and determined by human needs. Marx, thus, differentiates between the conditions forced upon human beings and the human self. Work is the central orientation of human beings.

> "It is just in his work upon the objective world that man really proves himself as a *species-being*....While, therefore, alienated labour takes away the object of production from man, it also takes away his *species-life*, his real objectivity as a species-being, and changes his advantage over animals into a disadvantage in so far as his inorganic body, nature, is taken from him."[146]

Alienation has various faces. Marx defined self-alienation of human beings in relation to "what they produce" and "the way they have to work", "other persons" and "humanity"[147]. Workers do not receive or own what they produce. The ownership of the meaning of production lies with the factory owner or the farmer. Workers earn money for their work, and money dominates society. For Marx, money had the role of a mediator between a person and the product. It becomes a kind of "*veritable God*" who has the real power over a person[148]. Money thus separates a person from what they produce. Self-interest becomes dominant. In his "Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts" Marx argued that

> "... money is the *pander* between need and object, between human life and the means of subsistence. But *that which* mediates *my* life mediates also the existence of other men for me. It is for me the *other* person."[149]

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[146] Bottomore 1963, 129.
[147] Cf. Selznick 1992, 140.
[148] Cf. Lash 1981, 177.
[149] Bottomore 1963, 189f.

Monotony at the working place is another source of alienation. Dehumanising conditions also alienate workers from each other. As mere objects they work for their own survival and not for their social group. Baum writes that

> "(The workers') relationship to others is completely determined by their places in the industrial process... What takes place is the breakdown of friendship, of community, of common dreams and values. The worker finds himself in a universe of manipulation which destroys the common human fabric, out of which personal life is created."[150]

Finally, Marx argued that capitalism also alienates human beings from their own humanity. Frustrating work does not allow personal growth, improvements of working skills and development of the mind.

Under exploitative conditions, workers are objects and become enslave. They are not in control of their actions. To Marx speaking of the slavery of the alienated worker also included the slavery of the employer. Here Marx follows the Hegelian idea of "Master and Slave".

> "... the slavery of the slave is inevitably communicated to the master. By having power over the slave the master becomes slave himself... Thus, for Marx, the labour which turns the workers into objects ruled by the laws of the industry also affects the lords of industry... Their lives are determined by profit."[151]

Confirming the case studies, many scholars found out that life on farms is a vicious

[150] Baum 1975, 29.
[151] Ibid 29.

cycle of dependency. The farmer uses of cheap labour, yet needs a harmonious atmosphere in order to generate his profit, while the workers depend on the farmer to provide work and housing. They also rely on harmony and avoid conflict at all cost. Their relationship to work is probably more intensive than that of industrial workers because work and life is closely related on farms. It has been established that farm lives functions like a family. The idea that the relationship with the product, the crop, is more intensive supports the thesis. Still, conditions on farms are often far worse than in the industrial sector. Similarly, religious life is more intensive than in urban areas. This poses the question of how work and economic conditions, alienation and religion correspond.[152]

To Marx a solution to the social crises was the communal ownership of the means of production, the replacement of capitalism by communism. Religion, thus, had no place in this new society. Marx regarded religion and socio-economic conditions as interlinked. Consequently, religion is a product of alienation. It is something unreal, an illusion that deletes or eases suffering caused by alienation and economic conditions.
Moving beyond this point Marx argued that religion is always a kind of measurement of the failures of society. Religion protects alienation. According to Marx there is an analogy between the alienation through labour and religious alienation. It is not the 'objectification' as such that causes alienation,

> "...but the dominance exercised by products and relations that, in the form of 'things' have come to be endowed 'with a life of their own'...Similarly, it is not the 'objectification' of the products of men's religious 'work', of his response to and adoration of God...which alienates but the dominance exercised by religious images and symbols that...have thus acquired the status of 'alien powers'."[153]

[152] Lash (1981) hints at Marx' development that "...from 1844 onwards, it is with economic alienation, that analogies with religion, the 'pure form' of alienation, are increasingly drawn." (176)
[153] Ibid 181.

Marx is certainly right to argue that Christianity has often failed to criticise socio-economic conditions and to emphasise the political role of the church.[154] At the same time, as Lash points out, Marx seemed to fail to realise that religious fetishizing or 'symbolism' is not the main cause but the human alienation that results in religious alienation. He certainly denied the existence of God, but argued that the human enslavement led to a projection of something God-like that contributed to alienation.[155] Offering a Marxist perspective the ICT argues that

> "(a)s we are freed from the limits and constraints of past epochs, so we struggle from that which takes our historical power away from us. Religion is one such thing."[156]

In conclusion, the concept of alienation is central in Marx' thinking because it offers a key to overcome inhuman socio-economic conditions. Exploitative working conditions do cause alienation. Nevertheless it is doubtful that religion and socio-economic conditions alone can be made responsible. Marx failed to consider, for example, cultural reasons that contribute to alienation. With farm workers, one should remember that they often live on a farm for generations. They inherit a certain attitude towards the farmer, the church and life. As a group they have certain cultural imperatives.

Nevertheless Marx' interpretation of work, religion and alienation suggests for the context of farm workers and their experiences and problems that working and economic conditions are a source of alienation. Accordingly, the deep religious life would be a product of alienation because it creates and projects a world that is no longer achievable today. The situation, however, is far more complex, especially if one con-

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[154] Cf. Baum 1975, 37.
[155] Lash 1981, 178. Also 180.
[156] ICT 1991, 1.

siders that not only the farmer but also the workers are reluctant to allow changes. This furthers Marx' idea of false consciousness. It is remarkable that farm workers are deeply religious although they do not experience any major attempts of their churches to change their conditions. In contrast, the urban counterparts who might be even less related to their work express consciously a feeling of alienation from churches because their needs are not addressed.

Marx was right to argue that a dialectical link exists between society and its institutions like the work place or church and the mind, the consciousness. He writes in the "German Ideology" that

> "(c)onsciousness can never be anything else than conscious existence, and the existence of men is their actual life-process... Life is not determined by consciousness, but consciousness by life... Consciousness is from the very beginning a social product, and remains as long as men exist at all."[157]

Here Marx suggests there is a dialectic between the understanding of work and consciousness. This implies a social causality. Consciousness cannot be attributed to human beings as something that exists forever but is a product of the concrete historical conditions.

Finally, Marx whole idea of work, alienation and consciousness and the influence of social conditions is, in very generalised and simplified terms, understandable and to a certain extent even reasonable. Social conditions do have an influence of one's consciousness. However, they are not the only influence that attributes to the consciousness. Culture and traditions are also a constant in human life. It does not negate the influence of social conditions, but it is only one aspect. The change of social conditions

[157] Marx, K. & Engels, F.: "The German Ideology". New York: International Publisher 1947, 14f.19.

also does not necessary imply a changed consciousness. The socio-economic and political conditions of those countries that put Marx theory into practice mostly failed to conscientize their people. It shows that consciousness is influenced by more than social conditions. The question is rather how consciousness and behaviour interrelate.[158] If a person works in an alienating and exploitative work context, it influences the consciousness, yet a 'false' consciousness influences the way one behaves. Here the researcher refers to the behaviour of many farm workers who see the farmer as father and behave accordingly. Thus, it is doubtful whether consciousness is a one-way social causality. It is rather a cycle interacting with behaviour, for instance. Behaviour involves personal responsibility. Nevertheless, the extent of responsible action is influenced by one's mind and one's consciousness.

CONCLUSION

The thesis of this study that a relationship between work and religious expressions among farm workers in the Wellington and Robertson district of the Western Cape has been approached from different perspectives. Various biblical, theological and sociological concepts have been discussed. The hermeneutical approach revealed that the bible holds various examples of workers' experiences. The central role of human behaviour was a common factor. The Hebrew slaves in Egypt, as well as the day labourers in Palestine experienced dehumanising conditions and showed alienated behavioural patterns. Common was the lack of solidarity and community among them. The fundamental theological approach with the example of the papal encyclical *Laborem Exercens* and Gustavo Gutierrez liberation theology provided a basic theological understanding of work and working. God has equipped humanity with a responsibility for

[158] Cf. Moser, T. & Schervish, P.: "Theology of Work - A Liberation Perspective", in: Radical Religion, Vol. 3, No's 3-4 1978, 30. Their approach is exactly emphasizing this problem: "More theoretically, a study of work reveals the workings of two critical dialectics...the interactive of behaviour and consciousness and of the individual and society...To explore one's view of work is to explore concretely one's understanding of social causality -- that is whether consciousness produces behaviour or whether behaviour produces consciousness."

creation. Work is the major source to fulfil this task. In this understanding man and woman are subjects of work. Yet this subjectivity is endangered by the role sin plays in creation. Personal and structural sins have been identified as the major source of alienation. Thus sin has an influence on human behaviour. To change social conditions is an important factor, but social transformation is only an incomplete aspect of the attempt to advance the Kingdom of God. Marx helped realise the extent of the influence of social conditions and religion in the formation of human consciousness. Yet his concept of work and alienation is questionable because most human and societal failure is blamed on social conditions.

What has become apparent in the different attempts to explain the relationship of work, alienation and religious expression, is that sin plays a very important role. Sin is, in fact, as ahistorical as it is a timeless occurrence. It is an evil force not to be separated from human beings. It exists from a religious perspective since God's creation became sinful, yet it is historical in its consequences, in concrete historical events. Sins are not only those acts of personal immorality, but also a dominating power over individual experiences.[159] Bloomquist shares some interesting views on sin which, though not really new, are highlighting again that sin is a ahistorical and yet historical power in human life. Human beings have created a situation throughout history that very often causes injustice.

> "This causal connection often has been made in a way that places the present disorder in an ontological framework that lessens the urgency of tackling a specific historical problem: "After all, we'll always have problems like this"."[160]

To be not oneself and to be dominated by an alien power drives people in a state of

[159] Cf. Bloomquist 1990, 70.
[160] Ibid., 71.

mind where they are no longer in control of themselves. "To be in a state of sin is to be ruled by an alien power..."[161]. They identify with the other, the alien power, the oppressor, the farmer, for example, and lose their own identity. This can be experienced not only on a personal or social, but also on a religious level whereby faith becomes ahistorical and privatised.[162] Finally, the relationship between sin and alienation becomes more and more clear. Sin is the ultimate root of alienation, yet both are synonyms for a disturbed relationship with God, with fellow human beings or with society.[163]

[161] Ibid 71.
[162] Cf. ibid 80.
[163] Cf. ibid 81. Bloomquist refers to D. Sölle's discussion of sin who draws a parallel between alienation and sin and its disturbing effect.

CHAPTER SIX

"TRANSFORMING SUFFERING"- PRACTICAL ASPECTS OF A RELEVANT MINISTRY TO FARM WORKERS

The conducting of this research project on the interface of work, religion and alienation has provided new insights into the life of farm workers and raised questions for the researcher. These insights and questions are necessary and relevant for developing a practical approach towards this rural workers' group. The previous chapters have been primarily concerned with investigating different theoretical thoughts on work, religion and alienation. Different attempts have been made to provide a sufficient answer as to why farm workers compared with urban workers experience work and religion differently. The thesis of this study is that farm workers' socio-economic and living context influences their religious perception. The inter-relationship between work, religion and alienation has been underlined. The various biblical, theological and sociological concepts provided different aspects of alienation. It became evident that alienation is a complex pattern with different expression in society. Paternalism is one expression of alienation. Different situations create different levels of awareness, even if the extent of exploitation and deprivation is similar.

This chapter focusses on ways of how changes can reach farms, including different strategies of overcoming the evil cycle of paternalism, dependency and alienation among farm workers. The case studies and the theological debate have identified and explained causes and expressions of alienation.

Unlike many urban workers who actively reject their working conditions and are also

critical of the insufficient support of their churches, farm workers lack political awareness and appear to be ignorant, but also lead a very religious life. This has been attributed to the socio-economic conditions and the prevailing paternalistic attitude of many farmers. It is imperative to consider the cultural and religious self-understanding of farm workers. Because of their high profile in rural areas, the churches are one of the most influential groups on farms, among workers and farmers alike. The considerably easy access of churches to farms is very important in practical terms. It provides many opportunities for a relevant ministry to farm workers. Ministers and other church workers are important agents of change.

Before attempting to present a relevant practice the researcher seeks to define the meaning of praxis. It demands different levels of engagement. It includes, for example, the personal, societal or political level. Bloomquist develops the idea that

> "(p)raxis is more than the implementation or application of a previously defined theory. It is more than putting faith into practice, or making Christianity practical or relevant...The transformational change that praxis seeks is both societal and individual because of how enmeshed society is in the individual."[164]

Firstly, it is suggested that the political and socio-economic level, for instance new labour legislation, is an important one. Secondly, on a so called developmental level, a relevant engagement needs to address the lack of education among farm workers. Finally, on a religious level, perceptions and interpretation of the bible and Christian faith have to be re-evaluated. Not to be misunderstood,

> "(i)t is not that praxis takes away from the gracious activity of God, who es-

[164] Bloomquist 1990, 95f.

> tablishes right relationship with us...The praxis arising out of our understanding affects our interpretation of the Jesus event. Praxis is the mediating factor in communicating the mystery revealed in Jesus Christ."[165]

The interviews with farm workers of different farms in the Western Cape confirmed findings of other researchers. Farm workers' communities are apparently more dominated by paternalism and a lack of consciousness than other workers' groups, predominantly from urban areas. The different dynamics in rural areas and the interaction of social context and tradition need to be considered if one thinks of change. This is especially important in the light of many researchers and community workers being mainly from urban areas and display views and concepts that are influenced by an urban context. Hence, they need to understand why the rural context is different and how they themselves are influenced.[166] A reassessment of methods is encouraged.

The case studies established that farm workers are suspicious of influences from outside. Rural people are different and live in a very distinct social, cultural and economic context. This distinction (from urban people) is due to a number of reason. Firstly, many workers have internalised the attitude of farmers that outside influence and change is a 'danger' to the existence of 'peace' on the farms. This is a direct result of the prevailing paternalistic relationships on farms. Secondly, there is an understandable fear among many workers to get into trouble with their employer if seen with outsiders. If one understands the farm set-up as similar to that of a family, then it appears to be reasonable that conflict is avoided. Thirdly, unsuccessful or discontinued community development by different agents influences farm workers' attitude towards new attempts that may be destined to fail.

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[165] Ibid 96.

[166] See also Wolpe: "Adult Education and Woman's Needs: A Study of some Community Organisations in the Western Cape", CAC, University of Western Cape. 8 (cit. in Fife, T. & Nackerdien, R.: "Planting The Seeds Of Change: Voter Education And Rural Democracy". Centre For Rural Legal Studies, Stellenbosch 1995,14). The argument is interesting that "... adult educationists are subject to an ideology - the practice of which may not be as successful as hoped for, and of which they themselves may be unaware. Furthermore, their practice is derived from the belief that what they do 'empowers' people and 'conscientious' them...".

With this understanding a relevant approach towards rural workers, by churches and other organisations, can only be successful if it really empowers and frees workers. The following objectives are important: In a first step, the focus has to be on a relevant concept and principles of community development. They have to be applied or transferred to the specific context of farm workers. And secondly, from a pastoral point of view the significance of the bible in farm workers' lives is a priority. Since the interpretation of the bible is very legalistic it would be appropriate to re-evaluate or to propose different ways of reading the bible. The parable of the "Lost Sheep" (Mt 18) is used as an example for a contextual bible study.

The researcher is aware that this proposal is only one possible option. The suggestions are influenced by the conclusions the case studies have provided. They have not yet been 'practised'. However, it is believed that a practical approach also needs a thorough foundation. Thus, the whole concept is not static but subject of continious change.

COMMUNITY EMPOWERMENT AS AN AGENT FOR TRANSFORMATION

Paternalism is one of the major factors that influences the behaviour and consciousness of farm workers. In the previous chapter the argument has been pursued that behaviour influences consciousness, and that consciousness influences the behaviour of the workers. This is important in the light that the effects of paternalism have to be understood as a cycle where different factors influence and depend on each other.

"Paternalism was intended to deny workers any significant identity outside of

> their work relationship to the farmer. Farm life, in other words, lacks any fully independent civil society... therefore, farm workers' struggle is a struggle for such a 'private space', for civil society itself. They are concerned not merely to organise themselves as workers, but also to establish and legitimise a wide array of other formal and informal links among themselves."[167]

What can be deducted from Du Toit's argumentation is the following: There is a lack of communal structures on farms. This deficiency is usually more ascribed to urban areas. One of the most important features of life – community – hardly exists among farm workers.

> "The farm may be potentially a community; but it is a community deeply divided, one that still has to find itself."[168]

Thus, to establish communal links between farm workers is a very important objective. Some of the reasearch participants expressed the same concern. Divisions occur in particular among *drinkers and bekeerders*. Besides, non-drinking workers have in general a relatively better standard of living. They also relate better to the farmer. However, the set-up reflects a context in which survival is a major part of workers' consciousness.[169] Antagonism among workers is not surprising. Work is the most dominant factor of life on farms. Often there is no other distinctive identity.[170] To restore and recreate community among workers, the key concept is that of transformation. Transformation means a transgression into something new. It is a holistic concept that involves different aspects of human life. These aspects include the socio-economic, the educational and developmental as well as the religious sphere. The concept will be regarded as important for a relevant involvement with farm workers. However, the re-

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[167] Du Toit 1995, 335.
[168] Ibid 330.
[169] Cf. Mayson 1986, 16.
[170] Ibid 335.

searcher is well aware that this attempt can only be a preliminary and theoretical approach. It still needs to be re-evaluated in each specific context.

> "In our context, the meaning of 'social transformation' is in some ways intuitive, but it is clear that it must mean a dismantling of the edifice of apartheid and the reconstruction of society built upon wholly different principles than that of division and domination."[171]

If transformation is a sufficient and effective way to address the crisis on farms, a number of issues need to be considered. Every approach has to focus primarily on the attitude of the people it seeks to empower. A good example is the concept of conscientization by Paulo Freire, the well known Brazilian adult educator. In particular his insights on different levels of consciousness and his goal to free the mind of oppressed people of the so-called "false consciousness" and ignorance are relevant for this discussion. However, the researcher is aware that the classification of farm workers' attitudes as "false consciousness" is a critical one. It is based on the questionable assumption that the assumed (urban) class consciousness is the right and ultimate goal. Interesting here is Du Toit's cautioning that in sociological research, for example on paternalism, the lack of consciousness is judged or analysed from the perspective of urban class' realities. In the interviews for instance, a few workers expressed some dissatisfaction. Yet this dissatisfaction is expressed differently, and not in the 'militant' way as it might be the case with urban workers. Keeping quiet about a problem does not necessarily mean there is no problem.[172]

In order to educate people to become subjects of their own history a process of conscientization has to be initiated, argues Freire. People have to develop a critical awareness of their own situation. Then, in a way, they become less dependent and can attempt to

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[171] Cochrane, De Gruchy & Petersen 1991, 2.

[172] Cf. Du Toit 1995, 319. Du Toit also points out that "(u)sing your own head - even to promote the work of the farm - is not a virtue under traditional paternalism. Where other discourses concerned with labour relations try to encourage workers to take the initiative, paternalism actively discourages it." (Du Toit 1992, 12).

free themselves.[173] Here, Freire's important pedagogical action and evaluation on education and social transformation speaks of a liberation practice which means that

> "...the oppressed person rejects the oppressive consciousness which dwells in him, becomes aware of his situation, and finds his own language. He becomes, by himself, less dependent and freer, as he commits himself to the transformation and building up of society."[174]

Important in his approach is also that awareness needs to come from the people themselves. He distinguishes between different levels of consciousness. They are expressed and reflected in language, living conditions, self-concept and worldview.[175]

> "Consciousness is neither the creator of reality, nor is it merely the reflection of reality. On the one hand we cannot therefore interpret conscientization as something that happens simply inside you, but also we cannot interpret it without understanding it as something which happens without critical reflection.[176]

The view of reality is the key to an understanding of farm workers' difficulties and their resistance to change. In Freire's terminology one could categorise their consciousness as semi-transitive which

> "... is typical of closed societies with a 'culture of silence'. It is characterised by a 'quasi-immersion' or 'quasi-adherence' in objective reality as a dominated and conformed conscience with no sufficient distance to objectify real-

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[173] Cf. Gutierrez 1981, 91. See also for more details Freire, P.: "Pedagogy of the Oppressed". Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1977.
[174] Ibid 91.
[175] Cf. Schipani, D.S.: "Religious Education Encounters Liberation Theology". Birmingham: Religious Education Press 1988, 16f.
[176] Freire, P.: "Conversations with Paulo Freire" in: Religious Education 79 Fall 1984, 514, quoted in: ibid, 57."Freire has identified the lack of critical consciousness - rather than mere "ignorance" as such - as the cause of marginality, cultural submersion, and historical oppression of the popular masses". (ibid 16).

ity in order to know it in a critical manner".[177]

Freire's argument emphasises the complexity of oppression. His discourse reveals, however, that oppression is a very ambiguous term. The poor are not only dominated by external oppression such as structures, but also by themselves, by internalising this oppression.

> "The 'fear of freedom' which afflicts the oppressed, a fear which may equally well lead them to desire the role of oppressor or bind them to the role of oppressed...One of the basic elements of the relationship between oppressor and oppressed is *prescription.* Every prescription represents the imposition of one man's choice upon another, transforming the consciousness of the man prescribed to into one that conforms to the prescriber's consciousness. Thus, the behaviour of the oppressed is a prescribed behaviour, following as it does the guidelines of the oppressor."[178]

Freire helps understand what is at stake: unless the oppressed farm workers who have often internalised the farmer's attitude and domination do not fully realise themselves or are helped to realise their own oppression, there will be no true liberation. They have to try to overcome this state of their minds by expressing their dissatisfaction. As Gutierrez explains, they must be the "artisans of their own liberation".[179]

Conscientization and awareness have to be put into perspective and practice. Thus a process of learning needs to be implemented that facilitates conscientization. Community development is one option. Development as such is an ambiguous idea. Many (Western) concepts move from the assumption that there are people who are less or 'under-developed', poor and left behind by Western standards. They need to be

[177] Ibid 16. Other levels of consciousness are a "naive-transitive" and a "critical transitive" one.
[178] Freire 1972, 23.
[179] Gutierrez 1981, 25.

'developed'[180]. It is assumed that a certain 'status' has to be achieved in order to comply with the westernised notion of being 'developed'. This status is in general associated with literacy and education, a functioning infrastructure, technology, etc. and promoted by community agencies, governmental or non-governmental, with specialised agents. However, as many failed 'development projects' in the countries of the South have shown, attempts to implement often unknown and strange standards to people of different cultures and traditions partly fail because the highly trained 'developers' fail to consider and to listen to the very people they are supposed to develop.[181]

Swanepoel speaks in this regard more specifically of 'community development' and suggests that it

> "... fulfils both concrete and abstract human needs. Community development is not primarily a process through which the physical needs of a community are met. Unfortunately, there is quite a misunderstanding about this that leads to many project failures... The heart of the matter and the most critical characteristic of community development is that it is a learning process."[182]

Learning requires participation. It is communal because it reaches each and everyone in the community. Only then can one speak of transformation in its real meaning. It suggests fundamental change to a number of relevant issues. It improves the quality of a person's life, the communal living-together, the socio-economic context and, though a mere utopian perspective, the society at large.[183]

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[180] Cf. Swanepoel, H.: "Community Development. Putting Ideas Into Action. Cape Town: Juta & Co 1989, 1.

[181] This is only a short and very generalising description of development efforts, yet many examples prove this tendency right.

[182] Ibid 2. Development "...is not suitable for all situations... It is specifically unsuited for large scale modernisation efforts such as the creation of sophisticated infrastructure." (ibid 1f.)

[183] Cf. in this regard Hope, A. & Timmel, S.: "Training for Transformation. A Handbook for Community Workers. Mambo Press: Gweru 1984 Book I, 24, who offer a good summary: "There is no doubt in

For the proposed thesis, a number of principals of community development have to be discussed and evaluated. Some general guidelines are suggested by Swanepoel.

> "...Community development is a learning process, but then the people must participate and take the initiative from the start... (It) is need orientated... it is objective orientated... Community development is favoured by small and simple projects and cannot therefore address sophisticated problems through large scale projects... People involved in a community development project must be an identifiable unit... The attitude of the community worker should be one of respect towards the people, their norms and values... should not disturb the rhythm of the community. (He or she) should be open about his (or her) position and task."[184]

Moving to the context of South African farm workers, a number of Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) are actively involved and offer educational courses for farm workers like the Montagu-Ashton Group Life-Skills Programme, the Lawyers for Human Rights' 'Women on Farms'- Project or the Hluvukeni Literary Programme, to name a few. These programmes are valuable encouragement for farm workers, but have their limitations in gaining access to farms. This is one of the major problems for NGOs. A greater access is in particular granted to the Rural Foundation, a governmentally funded and rather conservative organisation that is closely associated with farmers' organisations and agricultural unions. Fife argues that the state left the control over the education of farm workers almost entirely to organised agriculture.[185] For example,

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this communities, that what is needed is both a change of heart and a change of structures, a cultural revolution and a revolution changing the economic, social and political structures."

[184]Swanepoel 1989, 86f. Here can be added that "(a)ny group attempting to build a movement for change needs to understands the group psychology of the communities with which they are working." (Timmel & Hope 1984, I 47)

[185] Cf. Fife & Nackerdien 1995, 12.

> "(t)here literacy courses are generally run by the Community Development Associations (CDAs) of the Rural Foundation. A CDA is a grouping of member-farms in an area, who contribute to the local community development."[186]

A CDA in Simondium (near Paarl) attaches the following goals to literacy training:

> "1. To improve self-image of illiterates. 2. To improve productivity in the work-context. 3. To improve chances of promotion. 4. To expand knowledge of the bible. 5. To use free time usefully and to curb alcoholism."[187]

In other words, adult education under the hospice of the Rural Foundation is mainly linked to productivity and promotion. Their strategy is emphasised and implemented by strengthening personal growth and attempts to abolish alcoholism. Though probably well intended, it has to be asked why there is no mentioning of the need to attack one of the root causes of alcoholism – the still prevailing dop-system on many farms. It is also questionable whether literacy is necessarily required to be more compatible, as Fife argues.[188]

> "The technical skill of reading and writing therefore plays a limited role in farm workers' ability to do their work... The importance that farmers attach to literacy differs markedly from that of workers. Consequently, the training courses compiled by organised agriculture fail to satisfy the needs of farmworkers,... Most often literacy training often happens off-season (i.e. in winter). Farm workers' working hours make it impossible to attend any lengthy classes with learners spread out over many farms, a centralised training proc-

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[186] Ibid 10.
[187] Malan: "Die betekenis van geletterdwording vir Kaapse Afrikaanse Volwassenes op die platteland." Unpublished Masters' Dissertation. University of Pretoria 1992, 18 (cited in Fife, op.cit. 11).
[188] Cf. ibid 11f.

> ess forces workers to walk great distances to attend any classes... (and) is restricted to workers which have a certain level of schooling... (and) workers still need the consent of the farmer to attend these courses."[189]

Not to be misunderstood, the criticism of linking adult education, and in particular literacy training, with productivity and promotion is based on the argument that the Rural Foundation seems to prioritise the demands of the farmers and their ideology to that of the workers' interests. It is, however, unquestionable that illiteracy has a negative effect on the ability of people to be trained and to be empowered. It also reduces the chances of farm workers to escape the vicious cycle of dependency and paternalism on farms and find work elsewhere.

In other words, a small-scale community empowerment does take place on farms in various regions of South Africa, but it is limited by the problem of getting access to farms as well as the small number of organisations who really take the plight of this rural workers' group seriously. The thesis proposes that the results of the case studies offer another option, namely the involvement of the churches in community development. They have relatively unrestricted access (though for reasons that often prove their conservativeness) and are very influential among workers and farmers alike.

Hereby,

> "(t)he question is, in other words, no longer whether farm workers will be organised, but also who will organise them. The wine and fruit farm has become the scene of a complex three cornered complex between three different approaches to labour problems: traditional paternalism, rural reform and militant unionism. None of the three are completely dominant and each is profoundly

[189] Ibid.

affected by farm workers' own attitudes and expectations."[190]

Although new labour legislation will play an important role (for example the Basic Conditions of Employment Act, the Labour Relations and the Unemployment Insurance Act),

> "(t)he situation on South Africa's farms will not be changed by administrative fiat... This poses the challenge of coming to grips with the tradition and cultures that exist on the ground in the Western Cape and elsewhere."[191]

The enormity of the extent of social problems in many farm workers' communities became evident through the fieldwork done so far by other researchers. Alcoholism is regarded as one of the major problems. One of the ministers mentioned other problems including teenage pregnancy, abuse of women and children, lack of child care facilities as well as drug abuse. Farms face structural problems like inadequate housing, education and health care. The churches' high profile on farms should thus offer the potential to fill the gap between the lack of provision of adequate facilities by the farmers and possibly the government, and the desperate plight of farm workers.

> "Development, liberation and transformation are all aspects of the same process. It is not marginal activity. It is at the core of all creative human living."[192]

Again, for a relevant approach towards the needs of farm workers the answers of the survey revealed the following: The workers solve problems mainly by approaching either the minister or the farmer. The minister might also speak to the farmer if necessary. Problems are especially related to a lack of wages and family problems that often

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[190] Du Toit 1992, 2f.
[191] Ibid 3.
[192] Hope&Timmel 1984, I 3.

are a result of living conditions and alcoholism. Hence, farm workers, especially the women, contact what Hill-Lanz calls an "outside agent" to help them with solving problems.[193] The farmer or manager and the minister are, at least on the surveyed farms, the only agents the workers have contact with. Since none of the farms had other organisations involved, strategies to solve problems are really limited.[194]

> "(r)esistance to change plays a key role in limiting problem solving and is discussed more fully under separate heading. In short, fear of change stems from a sense of vulnerability and the fear of losing whatever resources (not only) physical that have been acquired. Such resources are a buffer to increased poverty and dependence"[195],

argues Hill-Lanz. Another important factor to consider is the prevailing dop-system on many farms. It includes also the surveyed farms in Robertson. Alcoholism and the dop-system are a strategy by many farmers to keep workers obedient and on the farms. However, it is necessary to assess what alcohol means to the workers. It is safe to say that addiction is a way to avoid or negate a problem. It might also be a way of coping with the desperate situation and conditions on farms. Dependency and paternalism create an evil cycle of which alcoholism is a major part. The increase of domestic violence is one consequence.

Other reasons why changes occur only slowly to farms can be found in the fear of dismissal, lack of solidarity as a result, a religious faith that life is a reflection of one's own deeds and failures or even a result of the work of the devil. Low self-esteem is also important. Of the interviewed farm workers only a few openly raised concern or dissatisfaction with their condition. It is an interesting phenomenon that only those

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[193] Cf. Hill Lanz 1994, 29.

[194] In short, "(d)ependence on outside agents is exacerbated by the lack of resources or a woman's lack of access to resources such as employment, money, transport, housing and limited skills, lack of self confidence and other female decision making role models." (Ibid 29).

[195] Ibid 30.

workers who had overcome alcoholism were more outspoken and critical. They said that alcoholism was a problem and that they were not satisfied with the attitude of the farmer. With the exception of a suggestion that the minister put more pressure on the farmer as he was also a church elder,[196] the workers tend to avoid offering any solutions at all. These findings leave an ambiguous feeling. The 'culture of silence' Freire speaks of is a common reality on farms.

"... ONE OF THE PRIMARY WAYS GOD SPEAKS TO US" - THE BIBLE AS A TOOL FOR TRANSFORMATION

Are there pastoral answers to the challenges posed above? Under which conviction does community empowerment takes place from a Christian perspective? From the Indian context F. Sugirtharaj provides a good overall perspective.

> "We go under the conviction that as Christians we can transform suffering into a deeper knowledge of God's love as in the case of Jesus... the struggle among the poor is to express the meaning of the gospel in its fullest... Theology according to our understanding cannot be used to justify political situations, but to criticise such justifications... We see politics, economics, etc. as decisive spheres of Christian praxis..."[197]

The researcher next focuses on the pastoral task Christians and churches are called to.

> "The emphasis on educating people (especially those who are poor and marginalised) to become critically aware of the reasons for their poverty - conscientised' - with a view to their controlling their own destinies by creating al-

[196] Worker Farm E, 15.01.1995.

[197] Sugirtharaj, F.: "A Case Study on Organizing Agricultural Labourers for Human Rights, Self-Dependence and People's Organisation", in: Religion and Society, Vol. XXVIII, No 1 March 1981, 49f.

> ternatives centres of power in society, combined with a deeper understanding of the bible as a process of liberation, not least from oppression and poverty, provides a potent vision for the work of the church at the end of the twentieth century."[198]

The research has shown very clearly that the involvement of churches does not really challenge the inequalities on farms at all. With this thesis the researcher refers to an understanding of Christianity that focuses primarily on the salvation of the soul, but does not speak against the root causes of workers' problems. This understanding does not realise that Christ' death on the cross meant also a call for a holistic and total renewal. The reasons are manifold. Again the rural context is important. Farms are very traditional places with cultures that are not at ease with change from outside.

An important factor of initiating change is to involve the very influential bible. It became evident that the bible is the most important source of inspiration to farm workers. When asked about their perception, most participants referred to the bible as a book of "mooi woorde" and a moral and legalistic source. Significantly, to the ordinary farm workers the bible is not a source of inspiration for political or socio-economic change, but rather for personal growth. The bible is not related to a sphere beyond the individual. The minister in Robertson mentioned he would read and explain the bible to the worker in a very simplistic way in order for them to understand the text. He justified this attitude with the rather low level of education and the effects of dependency on the farms. Yet there was no attempt of really changing workers' perception or their way of reading the bible. There is also no mention of attempts to empower workers.

Farm workers are ordinary bible readers. They have their own way of interpreting biblical stories and have no specific training. To them the bible is a source of inspiration

[198] Wilson, F.&Ramphele, M.: Uprooting Poverty. The South African challenge. Report for the Second Carnegie Inquiry into Poverty and Development in Southern Africa". Cape Town&Johannesburg: David Philip 1989, 302.

which cannot simply be negated or rejected. Nevertheless, a trained reader may have difficulties in accepting an understanding of the bible that does not question the socio-political or economic status quo. It is centred around personal matters. This situation only emphasises the ambivalence of biblical interpretation. Whatever one's standpoint is, we cannot deny that

> "(t)heology is reflection on social and personal reality in light of the Christian faith. Theology that can transform workers' reality, that exposes and moves beyond individualism - privatization - victimization, must be transcendent (not captive to the ideology and system defining people's reality) as well as immanent (congruent with their experiences). It must be able to address the objective determinants as well as the subjective experience of workers."[199]

With its important role, it is argued that the bible and its interpretation may be one of the most important agents of change in farm workers' communities. The way the bible is read, is, according to A. Nolan,

> "(o)ne of the matters of crucial importance for the future of South Africa... in relation to our South African context. We all know how the Bible has been misunderstood and misused."[200]

Carefully implementing new ways of reading the bible without negating or denying the traditional way of interpretation will be suggested as a possible method of approaching the vicious cycle of paternalism and dependency among this rural workers' group. It is hoped that this will not be understood as a somewhat abstruse theory. It may sound ironic to speak of theology of praxis in a way one speaks about a theoretical concept. Yet proposing steps towards a relevant ministry is an invitation to look at other con-

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[199] Bloomquist 1990, 5

[200] Nolan, A: Quoted on the cover of G. West's book *Contextual* Bible Study 1993.

textual approaches. The experiences of bible study groups among ordinary people at grassroots level in 'Basic Christian Communities' in Latin America, and in particular Brazil, are important in this regard. The researcher is aware that these experiences cannot be simply copied into the South Africa context, but lessons can be learnt and they can be a source of inspiration for reclaiming the bible.

Carlos Mesters, a Dutch priest, who worked for more than two decades with Basic Christian Communities in Brazil, argues that

> "(a)s the ordinary Christian Bible readers gain in confidence to claim the Bible as their own, dislocations or shifts in interpretation take place from an upper class toward a lower class perspective, from biblical text to real life,... from an abstract individualistic understanding to a community sense..."[201]

Basic Christian Communities are small groups where ordinary Christians gather around the gospel. They aim to renew and restructure religious and social life.[202] They are "small self-determining groups (grown) together and have powerful effects on their neighbourhoods"[203]. These base communities have one goal that is of specific importance.

> "They search for solidarity and communion with each other as they search for some control over their lives, thereby seeking meaning and hope for themselves and their future on earth."[204]

The poor as mere objects can discover themselves as subjects, as "active agents" in

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[201] Mesters 1993, in: The Bible and Liberation , 3.
[202] Cochrane, De Gruchy & Petersen 1991. 90.
[203] Carey, G.&others: "Planting New Churches. Guidelines And Strucures For Developing Tomorrow's Church". Guildford: Eagle 1991 127.
[204] Ibid 91

history.[205] The starting point is reality and the confrontation of this reality with the gospel. This reflection of reality with the help of the bible would also be an appropriate starting point for farm workers in the light that the bible is very important to them.

Before an exemplary contextual bible study outline will be suggested, there are a number of aspects that have to be considered. First of all, a relevant bible study is not a formula but a process.[206] Such a bible study is contextual because it involves the people and their circumstances, the way they live and work, the way they suffer.

> "In other words, the Bible is not merely a tool for Christians..., the bible is the source of 'God's project', which is the project of liberation."[207]

The bible has to be read together in a community. The ordinary, as well as the trained reader, who will probably lead at first the bible study, both have something to offer through their different experiences. However, as Nolan says about the trained reader,

> "...no matter how well we know the Bible and Christian tradition, we will simply never be able to see in God's word what the workers see in God's word... we will always *miss* some of the things that workers will notice about what is said in the Bible."[208]

Reading the bible contextually is to see new ways of reality. It provides the ordinary reader with "analytical tools and helps developing a critical consciousness"[209] Farm workers lack to express this so far. Education to read the bible differently is needed on various levels. Workers should at first be trained by a minister. In a further step facili-

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[205] .Ibid 92.
[206] Cf. West 1993, 11
[207] West 1991, 175.
[208] Nolan, A.: "A Worker's Theology", in: The Threefold Cord 1991, 161.
[209] Ibid 176

tators from among the workers themselves could be identified and trained to lead their own groups. Here the bible could be read and discussed and a real community would emerge.

Before suggesting a possible example of a contextual bible study with farm workers the following objectives have to be considered. First of all,

> "(r)eading the bible *with* ordinary readers means that we trained readers... also recognize that ordinary readers have an important and different contribution to make to reading the Bible in South Africa."[210]

West concludes in his elaborations on contextual bible study that it is not the chosen text that is important, but how the text is read. Yet, even if less importance is attributed to the kind of text, there should be an understanding that at least in the beginning, the text should 'offer' farm workers something they can identify with. Choosing questions is an another important factor. The questions should facilitate the liberating and transforming process grassroots bible study is aiming at. They should be those that farm workers have or with which they can easily identify.

AN EXAMPLE OF CONTEXTUAL BIBLE STUDY - "THE LOST SHEEP"(Mt 18:10-14)

The illustrations that Rowland and Corner give in their study on liberating exegesis the parable of the "Lost Sheep" (Mt 18:10-14) offer a good example of contextual theology (see App.). The practical involvement of the church (here: the Bishop) is given priority over a religious service. The release of factory workers from prison is more

[210] West 1993, 74.

important. For constructing a relevant bible study this parable provides a good example of solidarity and community.

> "...the power of the community is in its preoccupation with the needy and in its search for those who are lost and most need the community support. The community of God's people does not exist for itself. It was called by God to serve those who are lost, because they have no land, no job, no home..."[211]

The well-known parable reveals that to God everyone is important and equal. The lost ones and the little ones are the outcasts, with whom God shows solidarity. The story, like the parable of the "Workers in the Vineyard", offers a surprising solution. Even the last one, the lost sheep, is important to God. Again, St.Matthew's tendency to focus on the divisions in his community and to stress the importance of solidarity becomes evident in this parable.

The following questions intend to offer a critical reading of the text. It intends help to facilitate a careful and meaningful bible study:

General Questions

1. What do you think this parable meant in the time of Jesus?
2. What do you think it means to us today?

Consider the following:

The "Little Ones"

What do we know about them? Who are they? Why does Jesus call them 'the little ones'?

[211] Rowland, C.&Corner, M.: "Liberating Exegesis: The Challenge Of Liberation Theology To Biblical Studies".London: SPCK 1990, 9f.

The Sheep

What role do the sheep have? What is special about the lost one?

The Challenge

Why do you think God does not want a single person to be lost? Why do you think is there a link between the little and the lost ones? Why do you think the 99 sheep are less important at this moment to God?

Today

What does this story want to say to us today? Who do you think are the little ones today? Who do you think are the poor? Why are they the little ones? What does Jesus parable mean to you farm workers?[212]

The parable of the "Lost Sheep" is a good example farm workers can identify with. They are exactly those who Jesus calls the "little ones". God assures the reader that those who are poor and exploited are very special to him. He calls each of His disciple to live in community with each other and to take care that the neighbour is not lost. God's attitude towards the weakest is also a call to the church not

> "to preserve the ninety-nine sheep who at the moment are gathered together. The model for the Church is to search unendingly for the needy."[213]

A new practical pastoral programme which really seeks to be relevant has to take its 'target group' very serious. The churches have to become a "prophetic agent of transformation"[214].

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[212] Cf. West 1993, 69f.
[213] Rowland & Corner 1990, 10.
[214] Cochrane, De Gruchy & Petersen 1991, 90.

A WAY FORWARD

Where are we going from here? Is the thesis of this study offering a basis for a relevant and contextual ministry to farm workers? Firstly, one thing became clear in the research process – farm workers are one of the most exploited and deprived groups amongst the poor in South Africa. Their context differs substantially from other workers' groups. Each context demands a different form of ministry, and consequently, the ecclesial praxis on farms has definitely to be changed. The fundamentally liberating gospel of Jesus Christ remains, yet to be contextual, the ministry has to adapt to the specific situation. A service with farm workers is different from that to a group of intellectuals. Hope and liberation remains, however, the common basis of the gospel.

> "The mission of the Church is to proclaim the Word of God to the whole word. The Church cannot hold itself responsible for the failure of men... to except it as God's Word; it has only to proclaim it with integrity and persistence. All else is secondary."[215]

The research approach has been very enriching for this thesis and was important for the process and content. During the course of the study, however, limitations of this research paradigm became evident. The purpose of the research was to collect data and not a participatory research. The process was not really engaging farm workers in a dialogue but let them rather be subscribed to the researcher's own concept and interests. Although it was the aim to collect data on a subject that has not yet been explored, it must be noted that the research was not really enriching to the participants.

Nevertheless, the present reality on farms has been explained in sociological and theological terms. It reflects on the dependencies and divisions that exist on farms at a mi-

[215] Mc Brien, R. cit in: Dulles, A.: "Models of the Church". Dublin: Gill & Macmillan 1974, 70f.

cro-level and in the broader South African society, on a macro-level. The role of the different churches and their attitude in this regard are ambiguous. They can be progressive and yet very conservative. This ambiguity requires an alternative ecclesiastical vision, a prophetic perspective. The thesis revealed a lack of constructive engagement by many churches, in terms of social and spiritual empowerment.

> "The Church is itself a sign of deep contradiction, at the same time it proclaims itself... the sign of the Kingdom of God."[216]

However, the researcher is aware that the surveyed farms represent only a small percentage of South African farms. The results are therefore limited due to the broad investigation being outside the scope of this thesis. Still, the implications should serve as a basis for further research. This is especially important in the light that, so far, no explicit research has been done on the religious side of farm workers lives.

Changes to farms come slowly. Even new labour legislation will not necessarily lead to a change of attitudes and conditions in the near future. Farms are very private and remote places. Though workers' conditions are changing and the Rural Foundation and other organisations, for example, do offer services, the real intention behind it has to be considered. These attempts often do not attempt to really change the root causes of exploitation, but are used merely to improve the profitability of the farms.

It is also important for a relevant ministry to acknowledge that life and conditions on farms are influenced by various factors. These are not only socio-economic or political. Tradition and culture play also an decisive role. The change of conditions does not necessarily imply a change in people's self-understanding or consciousness. A holistic approach that includes the different level of crisis such as the individual, the cultural, the religious and the political can really make a difference in farm workers' lives. This

[216] Cochrane 1987, 233.

will only be achieved in a very sensitive manner and if facilitated by people farm workers trust. However serious the crisis is,

> "(t)he theological imperative is to know that the resurrected Lord offers the entire church together with all the creation the opportunity for renewal."[217]

[217] Villa-Vicencio, C.: "Trapped in Apartheid. A Socio-Theological History Of The English-Speaking Churches". Cape Town: David Phillip 1988, 191.

APPENDIX 1

QUESTIONNAIRE

1. SOCIAL PROFILE

1. Name
2. Address
3. Age
4. Sex
5. Education
6. Occupation
7. Are You Marired?
8. Do You Have Children?
9. How Long Have You Been On The Farm?
10. How Much Do You Earn?
11. Do You Get Any Other Kind Of Payment Like Groceries For Example?
12. Do You Take Part In Any Other Activities On The Farm or Elsewhere?

2. RELIGIOUS PROFILE

1. Religious Affiliation
2. Denomination
3. Are There Any Churches On The Farm? - If Not, Where Do You Attend Church? How Far Is It?
4. Do You Attend Church Regularily?
5. How much Do You Contribute Every Month To The Church?
6. Are There Any Church Activities On The Farm? Which?
7. Are There Any Social Activities That Are Offered By The Churches?

8. Are There Other Organisations Working On The Farms? - If Yes, What Activities Do They Offer?
9. Do You Hold A Position In The Chuch, For Example As An Elder?
10. Do You Feel At Home In The Church? - If Yes, Give Examples.
11. Does The Minister Address You Specifically As Farm Workers?
12. Do You Have Contact With People From Outside?
13. What Are Your Problems?
14. Can You Talk To Your Minister About Your Problems?
15. Does The Minister Help You With Your Problems? - If So, How?
16. What Does The Bible Mean To You As Farm Worker In Your Daily Life?
17. What Do You Think The Bible Says To You As Farm Worker?
18. How Do You Think The Church Must Assist Farm Workers.
19. Is Your Church's Attitude Positive or Negative Towards Social Workers And Trade Unions?
20. What Do You Think Has To Be Changed In The Church And On The Farm?

APPENDIX TWO

THE LOST SHEEP - (MT 18:10-14)[1]

PARABLES OF TODAY

1. THE LOST SHEEP

1
John Bosco was going to be ordained.

2
The bishop liked him very much. He had known him since he was a boy.

3
John studied and worked in the community.

4
The community was so happy that John Bosco was going to be ordained that they decided to have a big party.

5
A real party has to have banners and flags.

6
Vera was making cakes and sweets.

7
Everyone helped to decorate the hall.

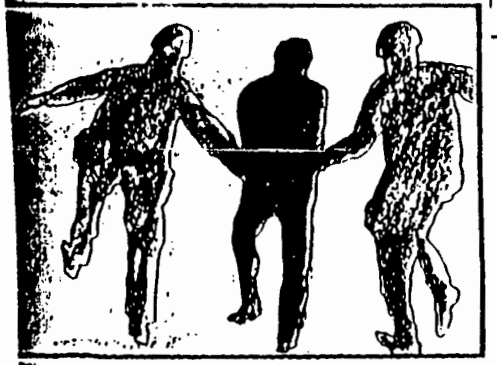
8
There were even flowers to make things prettier.

[1] Rowland&Comer 1990,8ff.

9
Maria trained the children to sing.

10
Everyone was there, talking and waiting for the bishop.

11
It was time for the ceremony to start and the bishop hadn't arrived. Someone went to phone him . . .



12
and got this message: a factory worker had been arrested.

13
The bishop had gone to the police station.

14
The ordination would have to be postponed.

15
Late at night, the man was set free . . .

16
and the bishop took him home.

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